Extra flights on Feb. 18-19 for Tinian Pika Festival. PAGE 2
Court partially grants motion to suppress evidence. PAGE 3

Hafa Adai!

$1

Saipan Tribune

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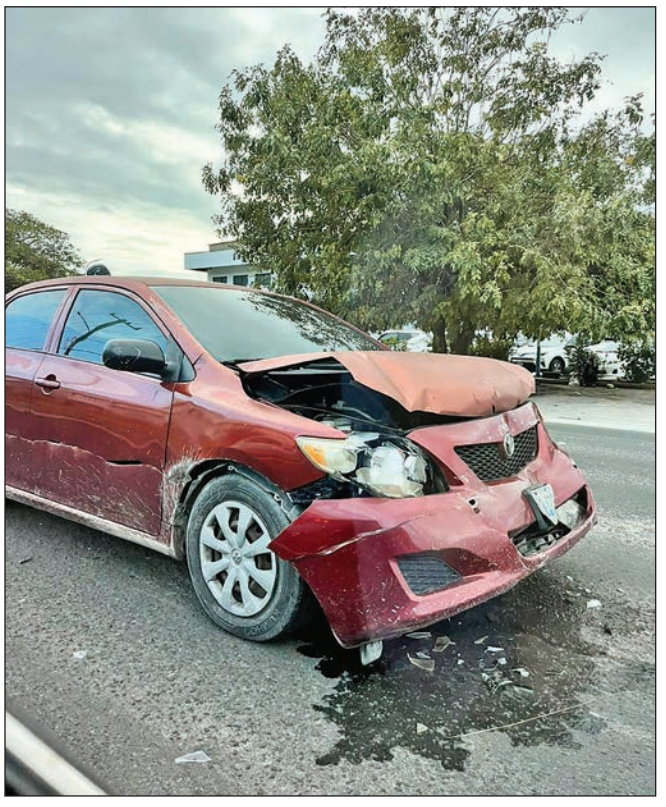
The *Deepstar Submarine* tour ran by Pacific Subsea Saipan remains suspended until further notice because there just isn't a large demand for it.
KIMBERLY B. ESMORES

SPECIAL REPORT

Are we ready? Part II



MIDDLE ROAD ACCIDENT
A car sustains damage after figuring in an accident along Middle Road on Saipan. There was no immediate word from the Department of Public Safety on what caused the accident or if there were any injuries.
GRACE CARREON

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The COVID-19 pandemic abruptly stopped the world in its tracks over three years ago, with hundreds of businesses forced to close as the public went into isolation. The detrimental effects were particularly felt on the islands because, as visitors stopped coming, virtually everyone who depended on the tourism industry stopped operating. Now, with tourists returning in flocks, are our tour operators ready to meet the growing demand?

See READY on Page 4

NMI's 2022 Economic Census kicks off

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Two visiting officials from the U.S. Census Bureau announced yesterday the kick-off of the 2022 Economic Census, which is a census of every business in the CNMI.

Economic Census assistant survey director staff chief Bobby Nusz and Economic Census assistant survey director Michael Sprung first swung by American

See CENSUS on Page 4

CUC in 1st phase of solar power project

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. is in the first phase of its planned implementation of a utility scale photovoltaic solar farm with a battery energy storage system on Saipan, with a capacity to produce 20 megawatts.

When completed, the project will be the CNMI's first photovoltaic solar farm with battery energy storage system and the third largest solar farm in Micronesia behind Guam's two utility

See CUC on Page 4

OPA: 34 recommendations for Finance still unresolved

» OPA tracks a total of 48 audit, inspection recommendations to Finance, other agencies

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Office of the Public Auditor has determined that 34 audit and inspection recommendations issued to the Department of Finance, including 15 new recommendations, were unresolved as of Dec. 31, 2011.

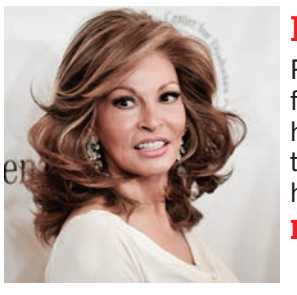
Unresolved recommendation refers to one in which the agency cannot take immediate action, or OPA has not been informed by the agency or de-

See OPA on Page 4

INSIDE

BUSINESS
Stay Café Saipan is an oasis of healthy food and drinks right in the middle of Beach Road.
PAGE 13

ASIA
China's parliament accuses American lawmakers of trampling on the sovereignty of other nations.
PAGE 15



LIFE & STYLE
Raquel Welch, whose furry bikini made her a sex symbol throughout the '70s, has died.
PAGE 15

SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

GOT A NEWS TIP? TEL: 235-6397 / 235-2440 FAX: 235-3740 EMAIL: editor@saipantribune.com

Local

Extra flights on Feb. 18-19 for Tinian Pika Festival

A full weekend of games and competitions are set for the 19th Tinian Hot Pepper Festival on Feb. 18-19, 2023.

The festival is affectionately known as "Pika Fest" among locals ("pika" means spicy). Activities will include food sales, live entertainment, competitions, arts, and crafts sales, and more.

Star Marianas Air has announced that they will be adding additional flights on the Saipan- Tinian route and extending their scheduled flights during the weekend. On Feb. 18 and 19 the last flights will leave Tinian at 9:30pm. Flights leave Saipan hourly at the top the hour (starting at 8am) and leave Tinian at the bottom of the hour. Reservations are required for any flight departing after 5:30pm on festival weekend and are also recommended for flights operating within normal business hours from 8am to 5:30pm. Reservations can be made by calling (670) 433-9996/7/8.

The festival will have a soft opening at 7pm on Friday, Feb. 17. Activities, games on Feb. 18 and 19 will begin at 10am and entertainment will continue through the evening. The event is organized this year by the Office of the Mayor of Tinian and Aguiguan with support from the Marianas Visitors Authority and will once again be held at the Fiesta Grounds in San Jose, Tinian, adjacent to the picturesque Jones Beach and House of Taga, a U.S. National Historic Landmark featuring limestone monoliths carved by ancient Chamorros.

MVA
Ricardo Carrazco chomps his way through 100 "donne sali" peppers on Feb. 13, 2021, to win first place in the Hot Pepper Eating Contest (Male Category) during the 17th Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival in San Jose, Tinian.

"We welcome everyone to Tinian for the 19th Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival, highlighting Tinian's small but famous 'donni' Sali' hot pepper," said MVA Community Projects manager Martin Duenas.

Hotel accommodations are available at Tinian Ocean View, Lorilynn's Hotel, Tinian Street Motel, Fleming Hotel, Green Lion House Hotel, and the Marpo Valley Inn. Free camping is available at Jones Beach, Taga Beach (toilets, barbecue pits, and outdoor showers available) and at the adjacent Tachogna Beach (barbecue pits, indoor showers, and toilets are available).

For more information, contact Mayor of Tinian event planning coordinator Dorthy San Nicolas at 433-1800/02 or via email at 2mot.externalaffairs@gmail.com. ***(MVA)***

Small craft warned vs sailing

A small craft advisory in effect from 6am Friday to 10am Sunday. This means that wind speeds of 20 to 25 knots are expected to produce wave conditions hazardous to small craft.

Based on the information received from the National Weather Service in Guam and compiled at the CNMI Emergency Operations Center State Warning Point, east winds of 20 to 25 knots and seas of 8 to 11 feet are expected in Marianas coastal waters. Conditions will be hazardous to small craft.

An incoming north swell, a stronger trade swell, and higher winds are going to produce sea conditions hazardous to small craft. Inexperienced mariners, especially those operating smaller vessels, should avoid boating in hazardous conditions. ***(PR)***

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IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

SHAWN CURTIS HOLT Petitioner, vs. MERLY BACANI HOLT Respondent,	: : : : :	FCD-DI CIVIL ACTION NO. 22-0456 SUMMONS FOR PUBLICATION

TO THE ABOVE-NAMED RESPONDENT:

YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED and notified to file any answer you wish to make to the Complaint, a copy of which is on the file with the Court, within thirty (30) days after service of the Summons upon you, and to deliver or mail a copy of your answer to the Petitioner whose address is PMB 667 P.O. Box 10001 as soon as practical after filing your answer or sending it to the Clerk of Courts of filling.

Your answer should be in writing and filed with the Clerk of this Court at Susupe, Saipan, MP 96950. It may be prepared for you by your counsel and sent to the Clerk of this Court by messenger or Mail. It is not necessary for you to appear personally until further notice. If you fail to file and answer in accordance with this Summons, Judgement by Default may be taken against you for relief in the Complaint.

Dated this 19th day of January, 2023.

/s/
Clerk of Court

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Court partially grants motion to suppress evidence

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Superior Court has granted, in part, a drug defendant's motion to suppress evidence acquired during the search of his vehicle and package that allegedly contained nearly five lbs of methamphetamine, colloquially known as "ice."

In a 30-page order issued by Superior Court Associate Judge Joseph N. Camacho, he granted in part and denied in part the motion filed by Zhang Yuzhu to suppress evidence found in his vehicle and a package he picked up at the U.S Post Office that allegedly contained nearly five lbs of "ice."

The part of the motion that Camacho granted was to suppress evidence acquired from a search of Zhang's vehicle. However, the court denied the part of the motion looking to suppress evidence obtained from the seizure of Zhang's package.

"[Zhang] did not have a reasonable expectation of privacy in the package at the time of the search and that Customs officers complied with their statutory jurisdiction requirements. Therefore, the court denies the defendant's motion to suppress the evidence obtained from the search of the package," he said.

"However, the court finds that the Customs officers' warrantless search of the defendant's vehicle did not comply with any of the established exceptions that would allow for a warrantless search. Therefore, the court grants the defendant's motion to suppress the evidence obtained from the search of the vehicle," Camacho added.

Zhang, 48, is accused of attempting to smuggle from California, through mail, 4.9 lbs of methamphetamine with a street value of approximately $700,000.

Zhang was charged with importation of contraband, trafficking and possession of a controlled substance. He has denied the charges.

Previously, through assistant public defender Veena Seelam, the defendant asked the court to suppress all evidence and statements obtained as a result of the search of his package, and the search of his vehicle without a warrant or other legal justification on March 19, 2022.

Through an interpreter, Zhang told police that an "unknown male" offered him $100 to pick up a "large parcel of chinaware" at a Garapan postal service and bring it to the back of the Mobil gas station on Beach Road.

Zhang also claims that the $4,239 in cash found inside his vehicle was his but not the 19 small clear plastic bags containing methamphetamine weighing 26.3 grams.

Investigators stated that the cash and meth found in Zhang's vehicle strongly indicated that he was a drug distributor and trafficker.

This evidence has since been suppressed after the court found the search of the defendant's vehicle to be unlawful.

PET OF THE WEEK

'Vicky'

Vicky is a very sweet, black golden retriever mix. She is about 2 years old and has so much love to give! She walks very well on a leash and is very polite. She wants nothing more than to be your best friend! She adores children and everybody she meets. She greets everybody with a wagging tail. She is a great dog for somebody who wants to take her out and about with them, as she has excellent manners in public.

She is being treated for a mild health condition by Saipan Cares for Animals and has almost completed treatment. Her treatment is covered by the Boonie Flight Project. She will be spayed, vaccinated, and has received medication against flea and tick!

She is available for adoption at the Saipan Mayor's Office Animal Shelter in As Perdido. Dogs adopted there come with vaccination and discounted flea and tick medicine. The registration fee is $30 per dog.

There are many friendly dogs and puppies waiting to find their forever home so come check them out!

Shelter hours are from Monday to Friday, 7:30am to 4:30pm. Contact them at (670)-234-3647 (DOGS).

Saipan Tribune is partnering with Lauren Cabrera, co-founder of the Boonie Flight Project of Guam, in collaboration with the Saipan Mayor's Office Animal Shelter in As Perdido, to feature their adoptable dogs into loving homes. Whether you are looking for a guard dog, lap dog, hiking buddy, or playful puppy, they most likely have the dog for you!

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Court OKs continued detention of man in drug case

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The U.S. District Court for the NMI has granted the U.S. government's request to detain a man who was previously arrested for picking up a parcel from the U.S. Postal Service containing over 1,000 grams of methamphetamine or "ice."

During a detention hearing yesterday, Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona granted the government's motion for the continued detention of Li Bing, a who was allegedly caught picking up a parcel from the USPS containing over 1,000 grams of "ice" last month.

The defendant will await further court proceedings from a detention cell.

According to the complaint against Li, during a routine inspection at the U.S Postal Service office in Chalan Kanoa last Jan. 26, Customs officers opened a package addressed to Li and in plain view was a white crystalized substance that later tested positive for methamphetamine.

Following the inspection, Li was arrested and brought to the Drug Enforcement Administration office for further investigation.

At the DEA's office, federal investigators who interviewed Li about the package were allegedly told that Li had received a call from the USPS Office on Jan. 26 at around 11am, informing him he had a package that was ready for pickup.

When he went to pick up the package, Li said he gave it to Customs officers, who opened it and found the crystalized substance, after which he was transported to the DEA.

Li told the investigators that he was not expecting a package, he did not know who sent it, and he did not know what the contents of the package were. He added that he had never been to the post office and that it was his first time.

However, investigators informed Li that Customs officers posted at the post office claimed to have seen him there about three weeks prior, to which Li replied he went to check if his package of sausages had arrived. This concluded the initial interview.

A few moments later, Li allegedly spoke with investigators again, claiming that he lied about the sausages.

He then allegedly stated that, back in December 2022, he was added to a social media chat group where he was instructed to send a photo of his passport and phone number and he would be expecting a package that he should not open. Li said he was told that after picking up the package and sending a photo, he would be sent a good amount of money.

READY

From page 1

Our pristine beaches can only keep our tourists entertained for so long. If you're visiting the islands for over a week, you won't be spending every day on the beach or in your hotel room.

Enter optional tours.

The CNMI used to offer a wide range of group-friendly optional tours, from submarine tours, to skydiving, parasailing, and all manners of marine sports, and the list goes on.

However, due to the pandemic, a lot of these tours ceased to exist or were suspended because equipment were either left idle too long, improvements and repairs are costly and there isn't much of a demand for such tours, or these operator just no longer have the manpower to operate at full capacity.

Saipan Tribune learned that in its prime, the CNMI had over 40 optional tours and operators. However, during the pandemic, the numbers dwindled and to date, only a handful of tours remain.

For example, the once beloved *Deepstar Submarine* tour ran by Pacific Subsea Saipan remains suspended until further notice because there just isn't a large demand for it.

According to Scott Eck, Pacific Subsea Saipan operations manager, if the company sees a prospective demand for the submarine tour in the near future, they could consider making the necessary improvements to bring the vessel back up to par with the U.S. Coast Guard requirements.

However, at this point, Eck explained that bringing back the submarine tour is just not sustainable and investing the money needed to bring it back into operation would do more harm than good for the company.

Fortunately, Eck said, Pacific Subsea has been back in operation seven days a week by providing charter boat rides for tourists from Saipan to Managaha.

Although they aren't making as much as they used to do before the COVID-19 pandemic, Eck said that being able to get three of their vessels back into operation is a small victory that should be celebrated.

In addition, Eck added that Pacific Subsea's boats—the *Yuri, Serenita*, and *Sta. Rosa*—have been improved and are back in tiptop shape.

As for marine sports, *Saipan Tribune* learned from Sakura Marine sports that they too have been celebrating their small victories.

With the number of tourists slowly increasing, Sakura has been gaining momentum.

"It's not like before, but at least we have business," said one of the business' representatives.

Sakura is currently providing marine sports such as jet skis, banana boat rides, and private charters from Saipan to Managaha.

In addition to these tours, the CNMI still offers ATV tours, diving tours, skydiving, and more.

Still, many of the CNMI's beach concessionaires—almost all of them small mom-and-pop operation with a tiny complement of employees—were forced to close down during the pandemic and have failed to make a comeback. This has prompted the Department of Public Lands to lift the moratorium on the issuance of temporary beach concession permits on Saipan, which has been in place for many years.

According to a news release from the Office of the Governor, DPL will be accepting applications for beach concession businesses effective immediately. These are the businesses that offer jet skis, banana boat rides, and tents for rent along public beaches.

The lifting of this moratorium will allow DPL to authorize interested individuals to use areas adjacent to boundary corners of hotels or within the vicinity, for commercial activities involving motorized and non-motorized water crafts.

Up to 20 permits will be issued per year due to limited space and safety reasons.

CUC

From page 1

scale solar farms.

The Renewables Program project would be a public private partnership between CUC, the CNMI government, and potential independent Renewables Group wherein the CNMI government will provide public lands available to CUC for engineering evaluation on utility scale solar interconnection.

CUC's project team of engineers are managing the project through the preliminary design, permitting and up to the project construction working with International Engineering Groups, CNMI Teams, National Renewable Energy Laboratory, and the Guam Power Authority.

The engineering design and feasibility evaluation work is performed by the international renewables engineering company S&C Group. S&C was awarded a competitive bid for architectural and engineering services by CUC's internal source selection committee.

Project funding was obtained from the CNMI Office of Grants Management through the Energizing Insular Communities Grant Program under the U.S. Department of Insular Affairs.

CUC's interest to integrate utility scale photovoltaic solar with battery energy storage system into the Saipan power grid stems from the potential financial savings that can be realized from long-term reduced cost of service and a potential rate component that can be considered with the current CUC rate structure.

The world-class 20-megawatt photovoltaic power project is scheduled to be commercially commissioned for CUC entering the second quarter of 2025.

According to CUC, the cost of service from CUC's diesel-power generations facilities is much more expensive than a photovoltaic solar farm of the same size. With CUC expected to replace more than 60% of current generation production from diesel power generators with PV solar power, CUC will reduce the ongoing operation and maintenance expenses from its diesel units. Further potential savings will be realized as CUC's fuel can be mitigated from price hedging on any rise in the price of fuel in the Singapore market. O&M and fuel savings can be reinvested in capital improvement projects and into the future of CUC power and energy systems.

The "state-of-the-art" photovoltaic solar and BESS system will provide the CUC electric power systems in providing additional available energy and capacity for the power system, it will help stabilize the electrical grid systems through power usage spikes, peak power consumption periods, and provide for quicker response to disaster recovery throughout the CUC power electrical systems.

"The CNMI will be benefiting from the contemporary technological advancements in higher-rated efficient and less expensive BESS systems, lower costs project components (solar panels, inverters, racking, control systems) that were not previously available. These contemporary technological advancements will improve the overall efficiency and the quality of these solar generation equipment," said CUC executive director Gary Camacho. ***(PR)***

CENSUS

From page 1

Samoa and Guam before proceeding to Saipan Wednesday for the Economic Census of Island Areas. They are going back to Washington, D.C. today, Friday.

In an interview at the Department of Commerce yesterday afternoon, Nusz said the economic census is something that they do once every five years, or years that end in 2 and 7.

"It collects basic business statistics such as sales, payroll, employment, inventories, capital expenditures, and a lot of other industry-specific details like number of guest rooms for the hotel industry, square footage for retailers, things like that," he said.

Nusz said it's a mandatory survey and it's due on March 15, 2023.

The U.S. Census Bureau is partnering with CNMI Department of Commerce Central Statistics Division to assist them with the data collection and to provide assistance to the respondents.

Sprung said the economic census is very important for the measurement of the economy on the islands.

Sprung said the last baseline picture they got from the CNMI was in 2017.

"This 2022 baseline comes after a number of major events, significant typhoon, as well as global pandemic," he said.

Sprung said business participation is more essential than ever just to make sure that they get the correct numbers for where things are today in the economy on the islands.

CNMI Department of Commerce Central Statistics Division director Justin H. Andrew, who arranged the interview yesterday with the visiting U.S. Census officials, said their role is to partner with the those from the U.S. Census Bureau.

"And we do the follow up work for the businesses that don't respond during the given timeframe and to get them to respond," Andrew said.

Sprung said the assistance of Andrew and his office is essential to the success of the survey.

Sprung said they had to wait until the year 2022 is over to send out the forms for business to report the calendar year.

Nusz noted that CNMI has a very strong participation rate with the economic census.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

OPA

From page 1

partment of any action taken to address the recommendation.

Temporary Public Auditor Dora Deleon Guerrero provided yesterday members of the Interagency Audit Coordinating Advisory Group with a copy of the status report on CNMI agencies' implementation of recommendations reported in audit and inspection reports issued by OPA as of Dec. 31, 2022.

Members of the advisory group are Senate President Edith E. DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan), House of Representatives Speaker Edmund S. Villagomez (Ind-Saipan), House minority leader Patrick H. San Nicolas (R-Tinian), acting Finance secretary Tracy B. Norita, and special assistant for the Office of Management and Budget Virginia Villagomez.

Deleon Guerrero said OPA tracked a total of 48 audit and inspection recommendations.

OPA's procedures include sending follow-up emails and contacting government agencies.

According to OPA's report on the status of audit recommendations, the unresolved for Finance were eight on audit of government vehicles, seven on audit of cash on Tinian and Rota, nine on audit of the Hotel Occupancy Tax, two on audit of the CNMI government travel policy, two more on audit of government vehicles, five on audit of CNMI Government Fuel Contract, and one on audit of excise taxes.

With respect to unresolved audit and inspection reports on other agencies, OPA determined there were two outstanding on audit of the Department of Lands and Natural Resources Outer Cove Marina Facility, five on audit of the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp.'s CNMI Medical Referral Services Office, three on inspection of the Commonwealth Election Commission's ballot accountability, and one on audit of CHCC's patient revenue cycle.

Regarding the unresolved audit of government vehicles, among many OPA's recommendations was for Finance Division of Procurement Services to establish policies and procedures to ensure all supporting documents for all purchases are complete, properly filed, monitored, and maintained.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

Former senator Santos is appointed DPL secretary

Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang has appointed former Rota senator Teresita A. Santos to serve as secretary of the Department of Public Lands.

Apatang, as acting governor, has also appointed Northern Marianas College Admission counselor Victoria S. Bellas to serve as a member of the Civil Service Commission, and Public School System Special Education program director Donna Flores as a member of the CNMI Scholarship board, representing Saipan and Northern Islands.

Apatang recently informed Senate President Edith E. DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan) Tuesday and last week that he and Gov. Arnold I. Palacios are confident that Santos, Bellas, and Flores are qualified to fill their vital responsibilities.

» Bellas nominated to Civil Service Commission, Flores to CNMI Scholarship Board

Santos' nomination requires the advice and consent of the Senate.

Santos, an independent, ran unsuccessfully for Rota mayor last November election. She served two terms in the Senate and two terms in the House of Representatives.

Santos

If confirmed by the Senate, Bellas would serve a four-year term, which will expire in January 2027.

If confirmed by the Senate, Flores will serve a four-year term, which became vacant and will expire on June 22, 2026. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

Dr. Willis returns to Saipan

MMC & Pacific Labs, LLC announced yesterday that Dr. Jason Willis has returned to Saipan to join the practice and will be seeing patients at Marianas Medical Center on Beach Road, Garapan.

Willis is a board-certified medicine physician with sub-specialities in infectious diseases and wound care.

He was the former chief medical officer of Kagman Commonwealth Health Center from 2019 to 2020 and worked closely with his sister, Dr. Tiffany Willis, who is also a provider at Marianas Medical Center.

He is grateful to be back and is looking forward to providing healthcare services to the residents of the CNMI.

To make an appointment with Willis, call (670) 234-3926. MMC & Pacific Labs, LLC or Marianas Medical Center is a primary care, family medicine practice specializing in comprehensive healthcare services. The clinic accepts a wide range of insurances including Medicare, Medicare, Aetna, Staywell, Calvos, Moylans, and TakeCare. ***(PR)***

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Dr. Jason Willis, a board-certified medicine physician with sub-specialities in infectious diseases and wound care, will be seeing patients at Marianas Medical Center on Beach Road, Garapan.

Mount Carmel School

"Educating the whole person to see with Christ's eyes."

Mount Carmel School is a school providing classes to K-12 students in the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands. Mount Carmel School is currently seeking a Middle School Teacher to join our campus located at Mount Carmel School, Knight Street, Saipan, MP, 96950.

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Qualifications: Bachelor's Degree in Education.

Candidates who fulfill the aforementioned requirements are invited to submit their resume to
Frances Taimanao: frances.taimanao@mcsknights.com.

CNMI DIVISION OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES
CNMI GOVERNMENT

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
RFP23-DCCA/CCDF-42300042

SUBMISSION DATE: MARCH 16, 2023 TIME: 10:00 A.M.

"For the full implementation of the CNMI's quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) Reach Higher, CNMI, and related activities"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED ON THE MUNIS VENDOR SELF SERVICE PORTAL (https://selfservice.dof.gov.mp/vss/) OR AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES, LOCATED AT HORIGUCHI BLDG, GROUND FLOOR, 123 KOPPA DI ORU & BEACH ROAD, GARAPAN, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ MARIBEL D. LOSTE, M.A.
DIRECTOR OF CCDF

/S/ GERALDINE T. CRUZ
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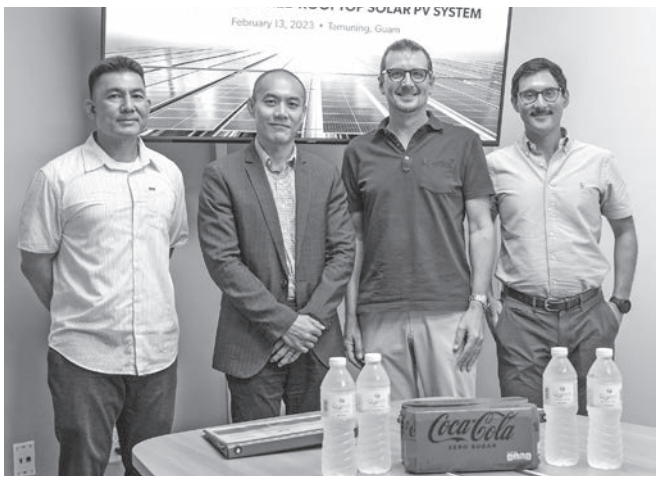
Foremost, Coca-Cola ink solar rooftop PPA with Solenergy Micronesia

Foremost Foods, Inc. and Coca-Cola Beverage Co. (Guam), Inc., the leading non-alcoholic beverage companies in Guam and Micronesia, has signed a solar power purchase agreement with IP&E Holdings, LLC., a local energy company that has been supplying the islands for over 30 years, to procure renewable energy produced by a 117-kilowatt rooftop solar photovoltaic system.

Under the agreement signed on Monday, IP&E will underwrite the investment in the solar photovoltaic system, which will be installed, operated, and maintained by its affiliate, Solenergy Micronesia, an energy systems engineering and solutions provider.

Foremost and Coca-Cola will purchase the power produced by the system at a rate determined by the beverage companies and IP&E for the duration of the contract term. At the end of the term, system ownership will be transferred to Foremost and Coca- Cola.



From left, Brian J. Bamba, managing director, IP&E Holdings LLC; Marcos W. Fong, CEO, Foremost Foods, Inc. and Coca-Cola Beverage Co. (Guam), Inc.; L. James Beighley, CEO, CPL Pacific, and chairman, Solenergy Micronesia; and Christopher H. de Leon, general manager, Solenergy Micronesia, during the signing of a power purchase agreement on Feb. 13, 2023, at the Citadel Pacific headquarters in Tamuning.

The grid-tied rooftop solar photovoltaic system featuring 216 solar modules and four units of three-phase inverters will generate approximately 191 megawatt-hours of electricity annually. This PV system is expected to enable Coca-Cola and Foremost to replace between 12% and 15% of their monthly power consumption with renewable energy.

The Foremost and Coca-Cola solar PV system should offset the equivalent of 1,530 metric tons of carbon dioxide and 330 gasoline-powered vehicles driven for one year over the duration of the PPA.

"The solar rooftop construction forms part of the long-term goal of Coca-Cola and Foremost to reduce the carbon footprint throughout our operations," said Marcos W. Fong, CEO of Foremost and Coca-Cola. "The initial purchase of renewable energy to power primarily our giant cold storage facility and secondarily the rest of the suite of offices in our corporate headquarters is only the beginning of our concerted effort to achieve energy efficiency and do our part to address climate change through green transition. We will evaluate the impact of our shift to sustainable energy on our operations. The results will inform our future plans to expand sourcing additional capacity for clean energy in the locales where we do business."

Brian Bamba, managing director of IP&E Holdings, said, "Sustainability has become such a focus from the global scale to local initiatives. As the licensee for Shell Petroleum Products in this region for over 30 years, IP&E understands the journey to transition our energy from fossil fuels to sustainable solutions can only be achieved if businesses and consumers are able to change products and behavior together, in a coordinated effort that is both environmentally and financially sustainable. I applaud the bold leadership of Marcos Fong, and his team of professionals at Foremost and Coca Cola. IP&E is proud to partner with Foremost and Coca-Cola in this project, expressing mutual commitment to renewable energy solutions for our island and future." ***(PR)***

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY(CPA)
CNMI GOVERNMENT

Main Office: SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
P.O. BOX 501055 • SAIPAN • MP 96950 • Phone: (670) 237-6500 • Fax: (670) 234-5962
Website: www.cnmiports.com

NOTICE TO BIDDERS

COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY (CPA) is inviting qualified contractors to submit bid proposals and their qualifications for the PORT OF SAIPAN BERTH 103 REPAIRS, Project No. CPA-SS-001-17, for the island of Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Bidders are to submit one original and two copies of their bid which shall be sealed in an envelope and marked on the cover package outside as follows: *"PORT OF SAIPAN BERTH 103 REPAIRS, CPA-SS-001-17"* and submitted no later than **2:00 P.M. (CHST), THURSDAY, MARCH 23, 2023**, to the Office of the Executive Director, 2nd floor of the Arrival Terminal at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport, at which time and place the sealed proposals will be publicly opened and read. Bidders are requested to minimize their company's attendees to ensure social distancing.

The Project, in general, consists of Berth 103 Cavity Repairs including all associated work, all in accordance with the Plans and Specifications.

The Project is being financed by the Commonwealth Ports Authority. The contract award, if it is to be made, will be made within one hundred twenty (120) calendar days from the receipt of bids. CPA reserves the right to hold such bids in effect for one hundred eighty (180) calendar days from the date of bid opening.

A DVD containing the Contract Documents including plans, specifications and the bid schedule, may be obtained at the CPA Accounting Office, 2nd floor of the Departure Terminal at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport, upon the payment of **TWO HUNDRED U.S. DOLLARS ($200.00)** for each set of plans and documents in electronic form (DVD). The payment is nonrefundable unless this notice to bidders is cancelled. Payment shall be made in cash, credit card, cashier's check or U.S. postal money order, made payable to the Commonwealth Ports Authority. Bidders should notify CPA's point of contact mentioned below immediately if there are issues retrieving the files on the DVD and are to verify all information using the specification table of contents and the index of drawings.

A pre-bid conference will be held at CPA's Capt. George Fleming Memorial Building Conference Room at the Port of Saipan, located in Lower Base on the island of Saipan in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), at **10:00 A.M. (CHST), FRIDAY, MARCH 10, 2023**, to explain and clarify any questions regarding this project. Attendance is not mandatory. A site visit will follow the pre-bid conference. Bidders are requested to minimize their company's attendees to ensure social distancing.

Questions should be submitted in writing to the CPA Executive Director's Office, 2nd floor of the Arrival Terminal at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport or emailed to Ms. Wendi L. Prater, Executive Assistant/Project Manager at wprater@cnmiports.com at least ten (10) days prior to the bid opening date; with the exception of extension requests which have no deadline. Responses to all questions and requests for information will be provided to all bidders who purchased a DVD and attended the pre-bid conference.

Bidders shall use the bid schedule form furnished by the Commonwealth Ports Authority on the DVD. Each bidder must also supply all supplemental information required in the specifications.

The contract period for construction of the project in its entirety shall be **FOUR HUNDRED TWENTY (420) calendar days**. Liquidated damages in the amount of **FIVE HUNDRED U.S. DOLLARS PER CALENDAR DAY ($500.00)** shall be assessed the Contractor for each calendar day that the completion of the Project is delayed beyond the contract completion date without approved excuse.

The apparent low bidder will be subject to a thorough and comprehensive review of its qualifications and Bid Documents to ensure that they are "responsive and responsible." This review will include, but is not necessarily limited to previous project experience, financial capabilities, quality of equipment and personnel, and bonding and insurance. If the apparent low bidder is found not to be "responsive or responsible", their bid will be rejected and the next lowest bidder will be evaluated for qualifications.

The Commonwealth Ports Authority reserves the right to reject any or all bid proposals submitted for: (a) any of the reasons set forth in this Notice to Bidders; or (b) any of the reasons set forth in the CPA Procurement Rules and Regulations regarding bid rejection or cancellation; (c) any calculation error made in the bid schedule or mis-enter of the quantity of line item; or (d) sufficient justification exists that awarding the project contract would not be in the best interest of CPA. CPA further reserves the right to waive any defects in said bids if in its sole opinion to do so would be in CPA's best interest.

Each bid shall be accompanied by either a bid bond by a U.S. Treasury listed or CPA approved surety company, a certified check, or a cashier's check in the amount not less than ten percent (10%) of the bid price. Checks shall be made payable to the Commonwealth Ports Authority.

All mechanics and laborers for this procurement project shall be paid no less than the minimum wage rate established by the CNMI or the U.S. Secretary of Labor, whichever is higher. A copy of the Department of the Federal Labor Wage Rate Determination is included in Section GP 70-26 of the specifications. The bidder shall take into account minimum wage increases that may be imposed in the CNMI over the life of the Contract and include associated costs in the bid proposal. The EEO requirements, labor provisions, and wage rates are included in the specifications.

The Commonwealth Ports Authority, in accordance with the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (78 Stat. 252, 42 USC §§ 2000d to 2000d-4) and the Regulations, hereby notifies all bidders or offerors that it will affirmatively ensure that any contract entered into pursuant to this advertisement, disadvantaged business enterprises will be afforded full and fair opportunity to submit bids in response to this invitation and will not be discriminated against on the grounds of race, color, or national origin in consideration for an award.

By submitting a bid/proposal under this solicitation, the bidder or offeror certifies that neither it nor its principals are presently debarred or suspended by any Federal department or agency from participation in this transaction.

In addition to the above, all bidders shall comply with all local and Federal requirements under this procurement.

FOR THE COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY:

/s/ CHRISTOPHER S. TENORIO
Executive Director

Date: February 8, 2023

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS (CNMI)
Homeless Prevention Coalition

The CNMI Homeless Prevention Coalition would like to give notice that it will be conducting its General Membership Meeting on February 21, 2023, 3:00 p.m. at the Tanapag Youth Center.

For more information, please do not hesitate to contact Jacob Muna at (670)234-6866/9447 or via email at jjmuna@nmhc.gov.mp.

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONS LICENSING BOARD
P.O. Box 502078, Bldg., 1242 Pohnpei Court
Capitol Hill, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel No: (670) 664-4809 Fax: (670) 664-4814
Email: cnmi@cnmibpl-hcplb.net
Website: cnmibpl-hcplb.net

Pursuant to P.L. 8-41, Section 11, Governor Ralph DLG. Torres and Lt. Governor Arnold I. Palacios, through the Health Care Professions Licensing Board (HCPLB) are hereby giving notice that it will hold its regular monthly board meeting on **Wednesday, February 22, 2023, at 8 a.m.** on Saipan. The meeting will be held at the Administration Building, Governor's Conference Room on Capitol Hill.

AGENDA

I. Meeting Call to Order
II. Determination of Quorum
III. Review and Adoption of Agenda
IV. Review and Adoption of Minutes (01/18/2023)
V. Public Comments
VI. Chairperson's Report
VII. Director's Report
  A. Investigator's Vacant Position
  B. FSMB's 2023 Annual Meeting – May 4-6, 2023 - Minneapolis, Minnesota
    1. Delegate Scholarships – 3 per Member Board (Dateline: March 15, 2023)
VIII. Investigator's Report - None
IX. Communications from the Governor's Office & Legislature
  A. Governor's Office
    1. Appointments of Cabinet Members, Agency Directors, and Board Members
  B. Legislature
X. Old Business
XI. New Business
XII. Pending Applications for Board's Review
  A. New Application
  B. Renewal Application
XIII. Miscellaneous Business
XIV. Executive Session: The Board may vote to meet in executive session to consult with Counsel on pending or anticipated legal matters.
XV. Announcements
  A. Next Meeting Date
  B. Adjournment of Meeting

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Extra love for the *man'amko* on Valentine's Day

Non-profit group NMI Women of Destiny has partnered with hairstylist Rica from Mary's Salon in Garapan to provide free haircuts, make-up, and hair arrangements for senior citizens last Valentine's Day, Feb. 14, 2023.

WOD members also distributed Valentine candygram gifts for the *man'amko* to make them feel extra special on Valentine's Day.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The NMI Women of Destiny partners with hairstylist Rica from Mary's Salon in Garapan to provide free haircuts, make-up, and hair arrangements for senior citizens last Valentine's Day, Feb. 14, 2023.

"Rica of Mary's Salon partnered with WOD to provide this service to the senior citizens at the Office of Aging this year, and also as part of her pledge to give back to the community," said WOD president Lorraine Ada. "We provide community outreaches every month to various organizations or agencies that we are partnered with."

Last Feb. 6, WOD also assisted in cleaning the surrounding areas of the Office of Aging.

Women of Destiny is a non-profit organization that support individuals who are victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, and people in recovery.

"We welcome individuals who need services such as treatment, advocacy, and just being there for the person," Ada.

WOD's office is located at Suite 315, second floor of Marianas Building Plaza in Susupe. Contact number is (670) 286-1977. ***(PR)***

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The NMI Women of Destiny assisted in cleaning the surrounding areas of the Office of Aging on Feb. 6, 2023.

3 Saipan students land on Hollins U Dean's List

ROANOKE, VA—Three students from the CNMI recently earned Dean's List honors at Hollins University for the fall 2022 semester.

The three students, all from Saipan, are De Faustina Camacho, Dionne Torres, and Nina Lauren Valdisimo.

To attain this distinction, students must earn at least a 3.5 average on a 4.0 grading scale. "Congratulations to these distinguished scholars on earning this academic achievement," the university said in a statement yesterday.

Hollins is an independent liberal arts university offering undergraduate liberal arts education and features 29 undergraduate majors and 15 coed graduate and certificate programs. ***(PR)***

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION

P.O. BOX 500514, Saipan, MP 96950-0514
Email: nmhc@nmhc.gov.mp | Website: http://www.nmhcgov.net

INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)
NMHC IFB 2023-005

(This ad is paid for NMHC with HUD funds)

BID SUBMISSION DATE & TIME: March 07, 2023, 10:00 a.m.

Purchase of Wildland Fire Truck for the Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services (DFEMS)

The IFB packet is available on February 17, 2023, at the NMHC website at www.nmhcgov.net by clicking on the "Procurement Tab".

Inquiries regarding this solicitation must be address in writing to Mr. Jacob Muna, Office Manager/Procurement Officer at P.O. Box 500514, Saipan MP 96950; email to officemanager@nmhcgov.net or fax to (670) 234-9021, no later than 10:00 a.m. February 22, 2023.

The provisions of the NMHC Procurement regulations, NMIAC 100-60-725 AND 100-60-730 Prohibiting Gratuities, Kickbacks and Contingent Fees shall apply.

For more information, contact Mr. Jacob Muna, Office Manager/Procurement Officer, at (670)234-6866/9447 or email at officemanager@nmhcgov.net during regular business hours, 7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, except CNMI holidays.

/s/ JESSE S. PALACIOS
Corporate Director
Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC)

/s/ MARCIE M. TOMOKANE
Chairwoman
NMHC Board of Directors

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-23-016

SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF BACKHOES AND TRENCHER FOR THE ISLANDS OF SAIPAN, TINIAN AND ROTA

The Office of the Executive Director for the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids for the supply and delivery of five (5) backhoes and one (1) trencher for the islands of Saipan, Tinian and Rota, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to assist with daily operations for the CUC Water and Wastewater systems.

This project is grant funded from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and the Department of the Interior Office of Insular Affairs (DOI-OIA).

Prospective Bidders must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $200.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked *"CUC-IFB-23-016, Supply and Delivery of Backhoes and Trencher for the Islands of Saipan, Tinian and Rota)"* to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on March 7, 2023** at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time or post-marked before submission deadline. Late submissions and conditional offers will not be considered.

A Bid Guarantee of fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification should be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid or supply under the contract. The IFB does not commit CUC to award a contract, to pay any cost incurred in the preparation of the bid under this request, or to procure or contract for goods. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed as per the CUC Procurement Regulations.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from registered Proponents and must be submitted in writing **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on February 24, 2023**, to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email manny.sablan@cucgov.org and Christie Sablan at christie.sablan@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids for any reason and waive any defects in the said bids, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids submitted shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS | OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
HAZARD MITIGATION GRANT PROGRAM
JUAN A. SABLAN BUILDING | CALLER BOX 10007 | SAIPAN, MP 96950 | 670.664.2417 | INFO@HM.GOV.MP

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
RFP23-GOV-42300039

2018 Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Island Standard State Mitigation Plan Update

Governor Arnold I. Palacios and Lt. Governor David M. Apatang, through the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) (collectively, "Commonwealth"), is soliciting sealed proposals from qualified consultants to update the 2018 Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Island (CNMI) Standard State Mitigation Plan (SSMP) in accordance with 44 CFR 201.4 and the requirements of the CNMI.

Proposal procedures shall comply with the CNMI Procurement Regulations, currently in effect, and with the Northern Mariana Islands Administrative Code (NMIAC) §70-30-3-725 Gratuities and Kickbacks and §70.30.3-730 Prohibition Against Contingent Fees. Public Law 15-95 Local Preference Act, amended by Public Law 15-118, does not apply to this federally funded project. All wage rates for employees performing the work, labor, and services on this project shall be paid at the current U.S. prevailing wage rates established for the CNMI.

The project package will be electronically available upon request to rlpangelinan@omb.gov.mp beginning February 03, 2023, or a hard copy may be picked up at the HMGP Office, Juan A. Sablan Administration Building in Capitol Hill, Saipan. A pre-proposal meeting will be conducted via Zoom on February 28, 2023, at 10 am ChST. The link will be provided at a later date.

Questions regarding this project shall be addressed to the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program Office, Ms. Leona Deleon Guerrero, Program Manager, via email at ldlguerrero@omb.gov.mp. Questions are due no later than 4:30 p.m., ChST, March 07, 2023.

The total proposal length shall not exceed 30 pages in length exclusive of appendices. A consultant that submits a proposal as a prime contractor cannot also submit as a subcontractor on another proposal. However, as a subcontractor, a company may be included in multiple proposals by different prime contractors.

Proposals will be evaluated and scored based on the following criteria:

1.	Qualification of key personnel	25%
2.	Experience in Data Collection, Mapping, Planning and Design,	
3.	processing and producing GIS data	25%
4.	Familiarity with the project site and conditions	25%
5.	Project Approach & Schedule	15%
6.	Cost	10%

Performance time for completion of this project is 180 calendar days upon issuance of notice to proceed.

Discussions shall be conducted with the top 3 ranked contractors. After a selection is made, negotiations will be conducted with the highest qualified contractor to determine the final fair and reasonable price of the contract for the work to be performed. The successful proposer will be subjected to a responsibility and responsiveness determination in compliance with Section 3-301 of the CNMI Procurement Regulations.

Proposals must be sealed and marked RFP23-GOV-42300039 CNMI SSMP UPDATE. For proposers within the CNMI, one original and three (3) copies of the proposals must be submitted to the Director of Procurement Services, 1st Floor Horiguchi Building, Kopa Di Oru Street, Garapan, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than 10:00 a.m. ChST, March 14, 2023. Proposers located outside the CNMI may obtain an additional seven (7) working days for receipt of their proposal by submitting a Notice of Intent to Propose. The Director of Procurement Services must receive notices of intent to propose no later than 10:00 a.m., ChST, and may be transmitted via facsimile to (670) 664-1515, or via e-mail to g.cruz@dof.gov.mp.

For proposers located outside the CNMI, one original and three (3) copies of the sealed proposals must be postmarked by the U.S. Postal service or the official government postal service of a foreign country no later than March 14, 2023, and mailed to the Director of Procurement Services P.O. Box 510008 CK, Saipan MP 96950 and the proposal documents must be received no later than March 23, 2023. Failure to submit the required number of copies of the proposal may be cause for rejection of a proposal.

The Commonwealth reserves the right to reject any or all proposals and to waive any imperfection in any proposal if, in its opinion to do so would be in the best interests of the CNMI government. All proposals shall become the property of the CNMI government.

Patrick C. Guerrero
Governor's Authorized Representative

Geraldine T. Cruz, Acting Director
CNMI Procurement Services

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MEMBER

The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Little heralded corporate pledges could go far to stem the migratory tide

American companies this month pledged to invest nearly $1 billion to expand manufacturing operations and other investments in Central America as a way of boosting economies, creating an estimated 1 million jobs and reducing the incentive for people to migrate northward. The pledges, on top of previous ones worked out by the Biden administration, now exceed $4 billion and are exactly the kind of action needed to address the immigration problem at its source.

Such investments are unlikely to stem the erroneous heckling by Republicans that President Joe Biden's inattention to the border is why the nation faces an opioid epidemic and a surge in illegal crossings, but addressing the causes of mass migration within the home countries is the wisest long-term strategy. Republicans demand that Biden seal up the U.S. border, use force if necessary and circumvent existing asylum laws (passed by Congress) in order to stop migrants from coming.

Those get-tough tactics might serve as a temporary deterrent, but history has proven that such efforts collapse over the long term. Even then-President Donald Trump's harsh tactics, including mass detentions and forcible separation of migrant children from their parents, did nothing to stop migrant caravans. And the GOP strategy would have minimal effects on the smuggling of fentanyl and other opioids that are coming into the country hidden in cargo trucks and shipping containers.

Nor would such tactics do anything to reduce the dire conditions in the migrants' home countries that are causing them to flee in desperation. Their willingness to trek through some of the world's most inhospitable jungle terrain and walk thousands of miles—often with children on their backs—to reach the U.S. border means something is horrifically askew in their own countries to motivate such desperate measures. That something consists of rampant gang violence, kidnappings, police corruption, a lack of jobs and employers who pay sub-survival wages.

There was a time long ago when Asian countries like Vietnam were basket cases of desperation and mass migration. Today, communist-rule Vietnam is an important U.S. strategic ally against Chinese expansionism. An employment boom there is the result of heavy investment by U.S. manufacturers.

So corporate investment can and does make a difference in turning countries around and stemming the migratory tide. But it's not the sole solution. Corporations must make clear to host governments that they will not tolerate shakedowns from corrupt officials, nor will they tolerate harassment of employees or worksites by criminal gangs.

Corporations also don't make investments just to be nice.

See PLEDGES on Page 11

It's time we make billionaires pay their fair share

By CHUCK COLLINS
Progressive Perspectives

Chuck Collins directs the program on inequality and co-edits Inequality.org at the Institute for Policy Studies. He's the author of the book The Wealth Hoarders: How Billionaires Pay Millions to Hide Trillions. *This column was produced for the Progressive Media Project, which is run by* The Progressive *magazine, and distributed by Tribune News Service.*

A fundamental question in politics is "which side are you on?"

In his State of the Union address, President Joe Biden called on Congress to pass a "billionaire minimum tax," which would ensure that billionaires don't pay a lower tax rate than ordinary working people. And what is the Republican position?

Well, here's a clue.

In their first act running the new 118th Congress, House Republicans unanimously voted to defund Biden's efforts to help the IRS crack down on wealthy tax cheats. Soon, they'll hold hearings on a quixotic bill to abolish the IRS and hit working Americans with a heavy sales tax.

So which side are these lawmakers on? In these acts, at least, they're siding with dynastic billionaires, global oligarchs and the nation's wealthiest taxpayers.

First, let's look at what happens without a strong IRS.

Dismantling the IRS, whether by cutting its funding or abolishing it outright, is a gift to the ultra-wealthy for whom U.S. taxes are already becoming voluntary. Their tax lawyers, accountants and wealth managers have outgunned the IRS in their ability to create complicated tax dodges involving trusts, shell companies and offshore banks.

A 2021 exposé by ProPublica found that more than half of the 100 wealthiest U.S. billionaires use a complex trust system to avoid U.S. estate taxes—the only U.S. levy on inherited wealth, which only kicks in for estates starting at $11.7 million.

In our 2022 study, "Billionaire Enabler States: How U.S. States Captured by the Trust Industry Help the World's Wealthy Hide Their Money," Kalena Thomhave and I dug into how billionaires are exploiting laws at all levels of government to hide wealth and dodge taxes. And new investigative reporting keeps piling on.

The New Yorker just helped uncover how descendants of oil tycoon J. Paul Getty deployed Nevada-based trusts to avoid $300 million in California taxes—and probably billions in federal taxes—over the last decade. And last year, Florida amended its laws governing family trusts at the behest of the Waltons, America's wealthiest family, to effectively place assets outside the reach of taxation and accountability for a millennium.

"The United States...is now the No. 1 destination for financial secrecy, surpassing Switzerland and the Cayman Islands as a jurisdiction of choice for global oligarchs and billionaires."

No wonder the United States, as the Pandora Papers revealed, is now the number one destination for financial secrecy, surpassing Switzerland and the Cayman Islands as a jurisdiction of choice for global oligarchs and billionaires looking to hide their often ill-gotten gains.

We need an IRS that can follow this money and shut down the worst abuses. But for over a decade, the agency has been targeted for budget cuts and layoffs. The number of millionaires and billionaires audited by the agency has shrunk as its capacity to shut down the shenanigans of the ultra-wealthy has shrunk.

Defunding Biden's efforts to shore this enforcement up—or abolishing the IRS entirely—would have the singular effect of helping the wealthy skate by. So where would federal revenue come from?

Well, that's where you—and the GOP's flat tax proposal—come in.

The so-called fair tax would establish a 30% sales tax, collected by states, on everything we buy—homes, health care, cars, groceries, college tuition—while eliminating taxes on wealth, capital gains and high incomes. An analysis of an earlier version of the proposal found it would increase tax obligations for the bottom 80% of U.S. households while reducing them for the top 20%. That means it's a big tax hike on the middle class and senior citizens. It would increase prices for everything during a period of inflation, all to let the wealthy off the hook.

We need a progressive tax system where billionaires pay their fair share the way the rest of us are expected to. And for that, we need a healthy IRS. Whose side are you on?

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Call from the Governor's Office

MY GLASS CUP

By JIM RAYPHAND
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Jim Rayphand is a former executive director of the Northern Marianas Protection and Advocacy Systems Inc. and recently ventured into a startup fishing business.

It's not often that I get a call from any Governor's Office for anything, much less a call to join a team of appointees presumably intent on making a positive difference in government and subsequently on having a positive impact in the lives of people in our community at large. Come to think of it, that has never happened to me…well…until a little over a week ago when I received a call and was asked if I'd be interested in "helping out with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation," otherwise known as OVR.

"Really?" was my initial suspicious and halfway sarcastic response. I almost, but didn't follow it up with, "Very funny! Who put you up to this?" In fact, a small part of me is still expecting a few of my friends to jump out of the cabinet, if you will, with cameras laughing and yelling, "We got you! It's a prank! Hahaha!" It would be an "epic" prank, if somehow even the governor was in on it.

The truth is that the affairs of our government are no laughing matter. And, for the past nearly 30 years that I've lived here, all I could do was watch from the outside looking in, offering little more than cynical drops of pointed commentary via articles such as this one or espousing know-it-all bits of wisdom around the proverbial, backyard picnic table. The idea that I might actually get the chance to put direct action to my years of yammering from the sidelines feels a bit surreal, but also feels right and is an opportunity that I could not refuse. Inasmuch as I never expected to get called up for such a task or get back in to this line of work, it is in fact an area of government that I feel confidently qualified to handle. Coincidentally, in my former job with the Northern Marianas Protection & Advocacy Systems, Inc., otherwise known as NMPASI, we administered a federally mandated program essentially tasked with being the "watchdog" for OVR.

In terms of size (both in staff and funds), the Vocational Rehabilitation program is a fraction of what other appointees are having to navigate, but it's purpose—namely to increase employment and promote independence for individuals with disabilities—is far-reaching.

In this, my first week on the job, our counselors prepared and we subsequently authorized approximately $15,000 in tuition and on-the-job training support for 12 eligible individuals with disabilities in support of their Individualized Plans for Employment. Now, imagine for a second what a tremendous help these funds (ranging from $600 to $2,500 each) must be for the individuals due to receive them and how much closer these get them to achieving their work goals—just an example of the kind of support (in these cases monetary) that is available here and an illustration of why OVR exists.

Beyond that, there is a general consensus, rightfully, among the staff that all of us are only here for the primary purpose of helping eligible individuals who come to us for assistance. One representative from the Governor's Office who brought me over to meet with the OVR staff on my first day very eloquently spoke about the importance of what OVR does and pointed out that his brother is an individual with a disability. "I want to thank you on behalf of the governor and myself personally for all that you do. My brother, as some of you may know, is an individual with a disability and OVR has very much been a part of his story," he said to all of us. "Please keep up the good work and don't hesitate to let us know if we can be of help in any way."

Many of us would likely agree that having a job is generally a good thing and most of us might also agree that having a job for which you wake up each morning wanting to go in for makes it even better. Given that our work at OVR is specifically to help people with disabilities obtain and/or retain jobs, it makes sense that we ourselves should value and be excited to go to work each day. In order to sell any product which for OVR is supplemental support and the prospect of being employed despite having a disability and despite (in many cases) being able to collect nearly equal pay in government benefits, we need to emulate wanting to go to work ourselves. It is much easier to sell something that you believe is important. So, for better or for worse, that's where my role as the new director begins.

Generally, I hope to do this from three simple starting points:

(1) Fostering a "safe" working environment: Everyone who works here should treat people and expect to be treated with dignity and respect. Inasmuch as we need to treat our clients and the general public with care, we need to do the same with each other;

(2) Holding each other accountable: We acknowledge and encourage genuine friendships among the staff with the understanding that real friends hold each other up, but also hold each other accountable. We don't do each other any favors by turning a blind eye to things we know should be corrected just because we are friends; and

(3) Being present (in body and mind): If we are to succeed in our mission, it is important that, as much as possible, each of us is present at work both physically and mentally. Our days on the clock should be spent working in support of or to improve our services—noting too, that for purposes of our line of work, spending time and speaking with each other can be an effective way to better our services.

Nobody is more surprised or thrilled than I am about being selected for this role. I am genuinely grateful for this opportunity and excited about going to work each day. For lack of a more profound way to put it, I get to help people to help themselves—such an honor. Also, I hope to help make OVR a positive, memorable part of many more life stories in the CNMI… ***[to be continued]***

Why America's schools are getting more political

By DAVID A. HOPKINS
Bloomberg Opinion

David A. Hopkins is an associate professor of political science at Boston College and the author of Red Fighting Blue: How Geography and Electoral Rules Polarize American Politics.

In U.S. politics, domestic issues tend to fall into one of two categories: economic or cultural. But it's getting harder these days to decide where education belongs. That's because Democrats and Republicans are talking about the issue differently—and their rhetorical dissimilarity shows how each party has adopted its own view of class conflict.

For most Democrats, education has always been largely about dollars and cents. The party's current policy proposals emphasize increased government funding to improve public schools' facilities and resources, expand pre-K programs and increase college affordability. President Joe Biden's plan to forgive certain federal student loan debts, announced shortly before the 2022 midterms but now facing multiple legal challenges, represents a benefit directed toward a specific population—current students and younger graduates—that Democratic leaders view as an important constituency motivated by material self-interest.

Republicans, in contrast, have become more likely to regard education as part of a larger cultural conflict. They describe public schools and universities as liberal-dominated environments that need to be prevented from forcing their ideological vision on U.S. society. Former President Donald Trump introduced an education reform proposal last month that includes cuts in federal funding for schools that teach "critical race theory, gender ideology, or other inappropriate racial, sexual, or political content"; a certification program for teachers who "embrace patriotic values"; and a plan to allow parents the right to elect the principal of their children's school.

"Our public schools have been taken over by the radical left maniacs," Trump says in a campaign video announcing his plan. "If we have pink-haired communists teaching our kids, we have a major problem."

Trump's recent focus on this issue seems like a response to Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, a potential rival for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, who has made the state educational system a primary target in his well-publicized "war on wokeness." DeSantis has enacted a series of laws in Florida premised on his belief that the state's public schools and universities have become focused on "the imposition of trendy [left-wing] ideologies," especially on topics like race and gender. He recently appointed six conservative trustees to oversee the New College of Florida, the state's honors college, with the goal of reforming its curriculum and policies to be less objectionable to the cultural right.

The parties' ways of discussing education reflect a larger difference in how they perceive social relations in America. For Democrats, the class system is defined by inequality of wealth, and government-funded education programs are a way for the economically disadvantaged to climb the ladder of success. In his State of the Union address last week, Biden vowed to make the educational system "an affordable ticket to the middle class" and proposed two years of tuition-free community college as a way to expand access to "the best career training in America." Like many Democrats before him, Biden seeks the support of working-class voters by claiming that his party's education platform will provide them with the opportunity for upward economic mobility.

For Republicans, the important class distinction is not between the economic haves and have-nots, but between those with more cultural power and those with less. Republican leaders make their own populist appeals to blue-collar voters by targeting institutions led by well-educated, socially progressive professionals—increasingly including the educational system itself.

"In the radical left's America … our children are taught to hate one another on account of their race, but not to love one another or our great country," argued Arkansas Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders in her State of the Union response. "We are under attack in a left-wing culture war we didn't start and never wanted to fight."

Neither party's vision consistently prevails over the other. The growing salience of cultural concerns has led white Americans without a college degree to support Republican candidates by a two-to-one margin in recent elections. Republican voters also hold increasingly negative opinions of U.S. higher education.

Yet rates of educational attainment continue to rise as Americans perceive that staying in school will provide them with a greater economic return after they graduate, and politicians who propose cuts to education spending risk facing a popular backlash even in conservative constituencies. In fact, despite their sharp criticisms of public educators, both DeSantis and Huckabee Sanders have recently proposed increasing teacher salaries and other education funding in their home states.

The struggle over how to frame education policy will continue as long as voters see some truth in how both parties view the class divide in America.

PLEDGES

From page 10

Their bottom-line decisions will always be based on a cold analysis of profitability and stability. The bottom line for Central American governments should be creating the conditions for those investors to thrive, ensuring the kinds of long-term economic development that convinces would-be migrants that they can stay at home to attain the better life they seek.

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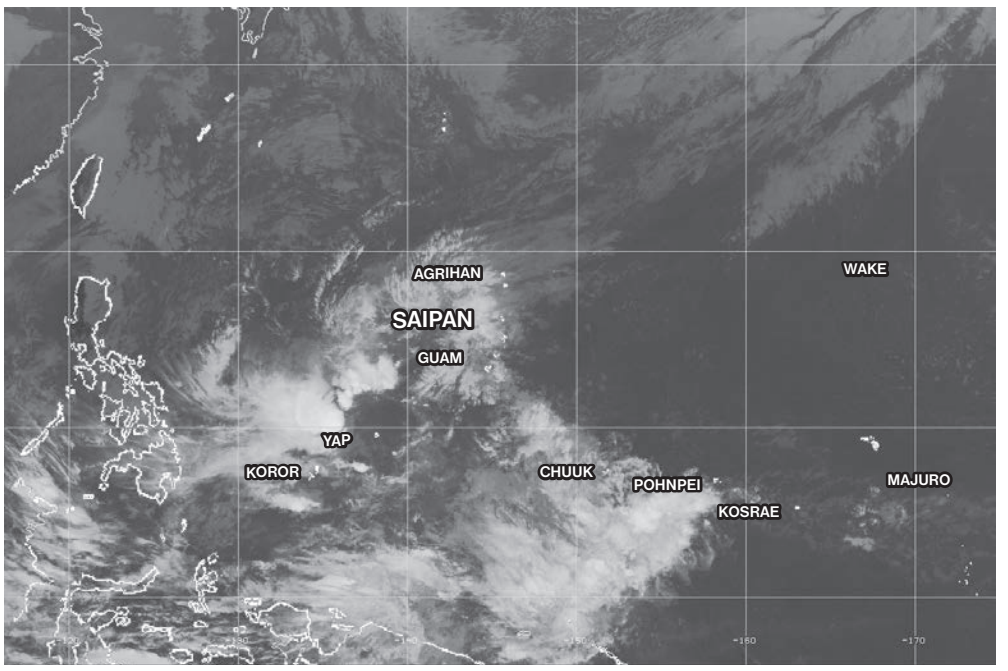
The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
Scattered showers. Partly sunny	Scattered showers. Partly sunny	Mostly sunny	Mostly sunny	Mostly sunny
86º / 78º	86º / 78º	86º / 76º	86º / 76º	88º / 76º

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 8:26 AM, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2023

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Radar shows scattered showers for the islands themselves and numerous showers for south western Guam waters. Thunder potential remains high. Combined seas are between 7 and 8 feet.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Thunderstorms	88° / 76°
Palau	Scattered Thunderstorms	87° / 77°
Yap	Thunderstorms	86° / 79°
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	85° / 80°
Pohnpei	Cloudy	86° / 78°
Kosrae	Partly Cloudy	86° / 78°
Majuro	Isolated Thunderstorms	85° / 78°

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Partly Cloudy	75° / 63°
Beijing	Cloudy	45° / 32°
Hong Kong	Sunny	69° / 62°
Honolulu	Mostly Sunny	79° / 64°
London	Showers	55° / 34°
Los Angeles	Partly Cloudy	65° / 44°
Manila	Partly Cloudy	88° / 73°
Melbourne	Rain	73° / 52°
Miami	Mostly Sunny	81° / 72°
New York	Light Rain	63° / 55°
Osaka	Mostly Sunny	52° / 37°
Paris	Partly Cloudy	43° / 36°
Busan	Partly Cloudy	54° / 46°
Rome	Sunny	57° / 41°
Salem	Cloudy	52° / 39°
San Francisco	Cloudy	59° / 43°
Seoul	Mostly Sunny	48° / 33°
Tokyo	Partly Cloudy	51° / 37°
Washington, DC	Rain	66° / 63°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:40 AM	6:21 PM
Saturday	6:40 AM	6:21 PM
Sunday	6:40 AM	6:21 PM
Monday	6:39 AM	6:22 PM
Tuesday	6:39 AM	6:22 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	3:39 AM	3:02 PM	-
Saturday	4:42 AM	4:10 PM	-
Sunday	5:41 AM	5:18 PM	-
Monday	6:34 AM	6:22 PM	-
Tuesday	7:22 AM	7:24 PM	-

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
6:38 AM	High Tide	1.67
11:23 AM	Low Tide	1.26
4:04 PM	High Tide	1.73
11:50 PM	Low Tide	-0.60

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF FEBRUARY 1, 2023

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA117	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily

SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)

UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	5:30AM	7:25AM	Daily
UA193	7:55PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau
UA183	8:00PM	9:50PM	Daily

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

UA117/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam
UA117/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau
OZ624/701	3:50PM	10:35AM+1	3,6 via Incheon

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

TW308	3:15AM	6:55AM	1, 4, 5, 7
TW9308	3:50AM	7:20AM	1, 4, 5, 7
OZ624	3:50PM	7:40PM	3, 6
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	8:00AM	8:46AM	Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7
UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
UA189	12:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA189/174	12:40AM	8:46AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
UA184/174	10:55PM	8:46AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam
UA192/174	10:40PM	8:46AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
OZ704/623	11:50PM	2:20PM+1	2, 5 via Incheon

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

OZ623	9:00AM	2:20PM	3, 6
7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
TW307	8:45PM	2:15AM+1	3, 4, 6, 7
TW9307	9:20PM	2:50AM+1	3, 4, 6, 7

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

MARIANAS SOUTHERN AIRWAYS

INITIAL DAILY FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF FEBRUARY 13, 2023

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
11:20 A.M.	11:38 A.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
3:40 P.M.	3:58 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
9:40 A.M.	9:58 A.M.	6,7

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
12:00 P.M.	12:18 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
4:20 P.M.	4:38 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
10:20 A.M.	10:38 A.M.	6,7

SAIPAN TO ROTA

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
7:20 A.M.	8:00 A.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
5:00 P.M.	5:40 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
7:40 A.M.	8:20 A.M.	6,7

ROTA TO SAIPAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
10:20 A.M.	11:00 A.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
6:00 P.M.	6:40 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
8:40 A.M.	9:20 A.M.	6,7

SAIPAN TO GUAM

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
12:00 P.M.	1:00 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
2:00 P.M.	3:00 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
7:00 P.M.	8:00 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
11:00 A.M.	12:00 P.M.	6,7

GUAM TO SAIPAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1:30 P.M.	2:30 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
5:30 P.M.	6:30 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
9:00 P.M.	10:00 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
12:30 P.M.	1:30 P.M.	6,7

ROTA TO GUAM

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
8:20 A.M.	8:55 A.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
4:25 P.M.	5:00 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5

GUAM TO ROTA

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
9:25 A.M.	10:00 A.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
3:30 P.M.	4:05 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7)

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JUNE 1, 2022

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30	9:00	Daily
1302	11:00	11:30	Mon/Wed/Fri
1302	12:00	12:30	Tues/Thurs/Sat/Sun
1303	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	13:00	13:30	Tues/Thurs/Sat/Sun
3102	14:00	14:30	Mon/Wed/Fri
3103	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

LIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	12:00	12:30	Mon/Wed/Fri

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	13:00	13:30	Mon/Wed/Fri

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	10:00	10:15	Daily
1208	14:00	14:15	Daily
1209	15:00	15:15	Daily
1210	16:00	16:15	Daily
1211	17:00	17:15	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	10:30	10:45	Daily
2108	14:30	14:45	Daily
2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
2111	17:30	17:45	Daily

Business

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Stay Café: An oasis of health in Garapan

Stay Café Saipan is an oasis of healthy food and drinks right smack in the middle of Beach Road in Garapan.

Like other coffee shops on island, the establishment is chock full of percolating delights like caramel macchiato, hazelnut macchiato, mocha/vanilla latte, matcha (green tea) latte, Americano, and frappuccinos.

Stay Café Saipan also offers your choice of smoothies (strawberry, blueberry, bananas, and seasonal fruit like taro, mango, and honeydew) and its own unique blend of iced fruit teas, hot tea, milk tea, and fresh juice.

But what separates it from other cafes is owner Shu Li Yu opened the café in November 2021—during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic—as a way of keeping the island community healthy.

"The main purpose is to maintain my own living needs. In the face of the pandemic, I use a healthy life philosophy, mentality, and attitude to face reality positively, trying to make my customers feel that business is not only about making money, we can go to health, happiness, safety, and a positive attitude of life," she said.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Stay Café Saipan is located along Beach Road next to Saipan Computer Services and right across 13 Fishermen Monument.

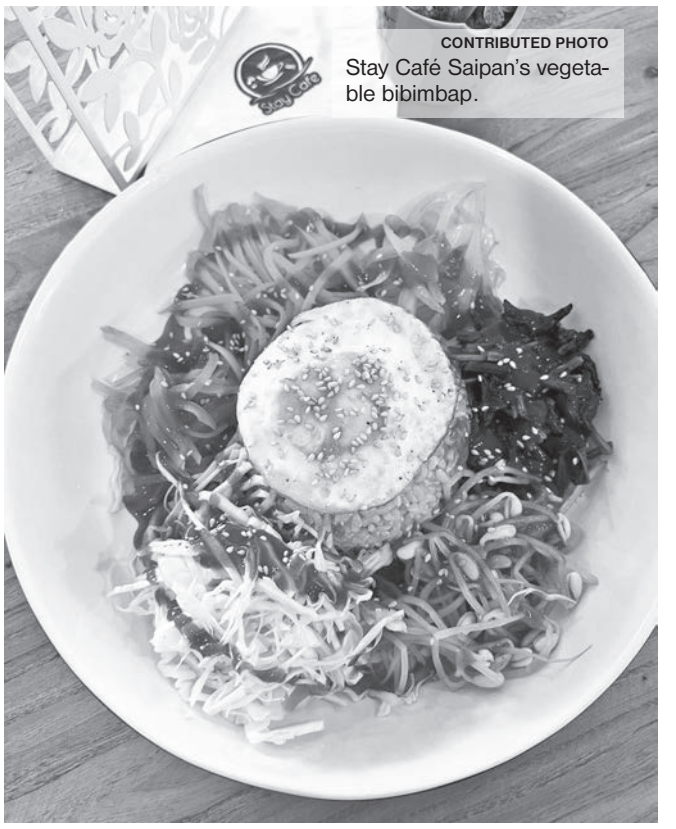
And Yu's philosophy in life trickles into how she does business, especially on how she operates Stay Café Saipan.

We named our coffee shop 'Stay Café' because it means stay healthy, stay safe, and stay happy! Our mission is to nourish the community. We believe healthy and local food systems are an essential part of nourished communities. Working directly with local farmers and making everything in small batches allows us to make our nutritious, organic pantry more accessible, sustainable, and delicious."

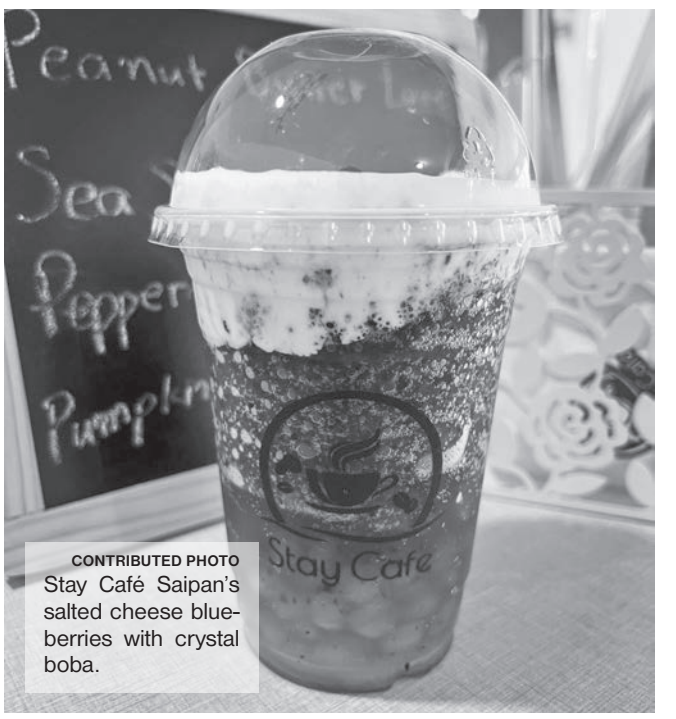
Yu said what makes Stay Café Saipan different from other cafes on island is they only use fresh fruits, and real milk and cream, as well as make their own tea daily. They also bake their light cheesecake and handcrafted cookies from scratch.

Yu and her staff also offer special drinks like fresh pumpkin spice latte, peanut butter latte, activated charcoal latte, and banana latte as well as fruit juice-based Americano.

Healthy choices also translate to Stay Stay Café Saipan's food menu as low calorie meals like chicken curry with rice, vegetable bibimbap, lo bah png or minced pork rice, stir fry chicken and potato rice bowl rotate, teriyaki chicken, turmeric braised chicken with roasted pumpkin, spicy bulgogi, and pork chops with brown rice rotate as lunch specials.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Stay Café Saipan's vegetable bibimbap.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Stay Café Saipan's salted cheese blueberries with crystal boba.

Stay Café Saipan is open everyday, Monday-Friday 8am from 6pm, Saturday, from 9am-6pm, and Sunday, from 10am-6pm. It is located along Beach Road next to Saipan Computer Services and right across 13 Fishermen Monument.

For more information, call (670) 233-5558 or contact them via Facebook.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

GOP subpoenas tech CEOs as part of probe into censorship

WASHINGTON (AP)—Subpoenas were sent to the chief executives of the five largest tech companies on Wednesday as congressional Republicans moved to investigate what they assert is widespread corporate censorship of conservative voices. Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, the chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, issued the subpoenas as the latest in a series of escalations by a party that has long promised to investigate Big Tech's content moderation, especially when it came to COVID-19. The letters were sent to Mark Zuckerberg of Meta; Sundar Pichai of Alphabet; Satya Nadella of Microsoft; Tim Cook of Apple; and Andy Jassy of Amazon.com. And in them, Jordan outlined the committee's objective to "understand how and to what extent the Executive Branch coerced and colluded with companies and their intermediaries to censor speech." Spokespeople for Microsoft and Meta said Wednesday that they have already begun producing documents. Requests for comment from Apple, Alphabet and Amazon was not immediately returned.

FTX bankruptcy judge denies request for independent examiner

DOVER, Del. (AP)—The judge presiding over the bankruptcy of cryptocurrency exchange FTX has denied a request by the U.S. bankruptcy trustee to appoint an independent examiner in the case. The trustee, who serves as a government watchdog in Chapter 11 reorganizations, argued that the company's financial affairs and business operations, including allegations of unprecedented fraud leading to its collapse, should be reviewed by a disinterested person, not left to an internal investigation. But Judge John Dorsey rejected the request on Wednesday. He agreed with FTX and its official committee of unsecured creditors that an examiner's work would be too costly and would duplicate investigations already under way by FTX's new leadership, the creditors committee and several federal agencies. "There is no question that if an examiner is appointed, the cost of the examination, given the scope suggested by the trustee at the hearing, would be in the tens of millions of dollars and would likely exceed 100 million dollars," Dorsey said. The judge noted that the goal of the bankruptcy is to return as much value as possible to FTX creditors and customers. "Every dollar spent in these cases on administrative expense is a dollar less to creditors," he said.

Upset Ohio town residents seek answers over train derailment

EAST PALESTINE, Ohio (AP)—Residents of the Ohio village upended by a freight train derailment packed a school gym on Wednesday to seek answers about whether they were safe from toxic chemicals that spilled or were burned off. Hundreds of worried people gathered to hear state officials tell them — as they did earlier in the day — that testing so far has shown local air is safe to breathe and to promise that safety testing of the air and water would continue. But residents had many questions over health hazards and they demanded more transparency from the railroad operator, Norfolk Southern, which did not attend the gathering, citing safety concerns for its staff. "They just danced around the questions a lot," said Danielle Deal, who lives about three miles from the derailment site. "Norfolk needed to be here." In a statement, Norfolk Southern said it was not attending Wednesday's open house gathering with local, state and federal officials because of a "growing physical threat to our employees and members of the community around this event."

Santiago is McDonald's new area supervisor

Effective Jan. 15, 2023, McDonald's of Guam and Saipan promoted Vilmore F. Santiago to the position of area supervisor for all Saipan McDonald's locations, along with Maite and Tamuning locations in Guam.

Santiago has been with McDonald's Corp. for about 20 years and with McDonald's of Guam and Saipan for the past seven years. He also ran numerous restaurants as general manager that includes McDonald's of Tamuning and Harmon in Guam. The promotion is well earned. It is in keeping with management's ongoing policy of remaining aware and appreciative of the contributions that Santiago has made.

Santiago

"I am so honored to assume the position as an area supervisor and I welcome and accept the new set of challenges. Being a father and husband is what motivates me to go on with my life as I look forward to achieving the small dreams in life. I am looking forward to learning more and gaining skills on how to run multiple restaurants and achieving their goals at the same time. Some goals I've made as area supervisor is to be an effective leader and to learn from my own mistakes so it will not happen to any other McDonald's restaurant. I am an open-minded person and will admit to any mistakes I make and I do believe that taking care of the people around you is a big factor in whatever business you have to grow."

McDonald's of Guam and Saipan, locally owned by Jose and Marcia Ayuyu, is the leading food service restaurant chain in the Mariana Islands. McDonald's of Guam and Saipan has served the local community for over 50 years in Guam and 30 years on Saipan and remains one of the islands' largest employers. ***(PR)***

Nation

Police seek motive of gunman who killed 3 at Michigan State

EAST LANSING, Mich. (AP)—The 43-year-old gunman who killed three students and wounded five others at Michigan State University had no apparent connection to the campus, police said Tuesday as they searched for a motive for shootings that terrified the community for hours.

Investigators were sorting out why Anthony McRae fired inside an academic building and the student union just before 8:30 p.m. Monday. An hourslong lockdown at the campus in East Lansing ended when he killed himself miles away while being confronted by police.

The shooting happened the day before the fifth anniversary of the Parkland, Florida, school shooting that killed 17 and is the latest in what has become a deadly new year in the U.S.

"We have to do something to stop the gun violence that's ripping apart our communities," President Joe Biden said in a speech Tuesday, mentioning Michigan State.

Meanwhile, a school district in Ewing Township, New Jersey, closed for the day after investigators said that McRae, who lived in the area years ago, had a note in his pocket indicating a threat to schools there. But it was determined there was no credible threat, local police said later in a statement shared by the superintendent.

AP

Libby Draeger holds a sign with current and former Michigan State University students during a rally at the capitol in Lansing, Mich., Wednesday, Feb. 15, 2023.

The dead and injured in the gunfire at Berkey Hall and the MSU Union, a popular place to eat and study, were all Michigan State students. Five remained in critical condition at Sparrow Hospital, said Dr. Denny Martin, who fought back tears during a news conference Tuesday.

"We have absolutely no idea what the motive was," said Chris Rozman, deputy chief of campus police, adding that McRae, of Lansing, was not a student or Michigan State employee.

"This is still fluid," Rozman said. "There are still crime scenes that are being processed, and we still are in the process of putting together the pieces to try to understand what happened."

The dead were all from the Detroit area. Two gradated from separate high schools in the Grosse Pointe district: Brian Fraser, president of Phi Delta Theta fraternity, and Arielle Anderson. Alexandria Verner, a graduate of Clawson High School in another Detrot suburb, also died.

"If you knew her, you loved her and we will forever remember the lasting impact she has had on all of us," Clawson Superintendent Billy Shellenbarger said in an email to families.

The shootings took place in an area of older, stately buildings on the northern edge of the Michigan State campus, one of the nation's largest at 5,200 acres. Just across busy Grand River Avenue lies East Lansing's downtown, teeming with restaurants, bars and shops.

"Our Spartan community is reeling today," Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, a Michigan State graduate, said at the morning briefing.

Biden pledged his support during a phone call, she said.

"We mourn the loss of beautiful souls today and pray for those who are continuing to fight for their lives. ... Another place that is supposed to be about community and togetherness is shattered by bullets and bloodshed," Whitmer said.

Michigan State has about 50,000 students, including 19,000 who live on campus. As hundreds of officers scoured the campus, about 90 miles (145 kilometers) northwest of Detroit, students hid where they could Monday night.

At 11 p.m., police were still searching for McRae when he turned up on school security cameras, and his image was quickly released to news media. An "alert citizen" saw the picture, recognized him in the Lansing area and contacted police within minutes, Rozman said.

"That was exactly what we were trying to achieve by releasing that picture. We had no idea where he was at that point," the deputy chief said.

Haley's candidacy shows balancing act for women in politics

By SARA BURNETT
Associated Press

In announcing her campaign for the Republican presidential nomination this week, Nikki Haley made a subtle reference to the historic nature of her candidacy.

"I don't put up with bullies," Haley said in a video that launched her bid to become the first female president of the U.S. "And when you kick back, it hurts them more if you're wearing heels."

Haley has plenty of accomplishments, including becoming the first woman elected governor of South Carolina and representing the U.S. at the United Nations. But her introduction captured the balancing act women — particularly conservative women — often navigate as they aspire to win the top job in American politics.

They must show toughness to prove they can compete against rivals who are almost always men for a job that has only been held by men. But there's also something of an invisible line that can't be crossed for fear of being viewed as too tough and repelling voters.

Haley

"We've seen higher levels of Republican women running and winning in recent elections," said Kelly Dittmar, director of research and a scholar at the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University. "But what you also see these women often doing is working hard to meet that double bind. ... It's like, 'I'm tough, but I'm also feminine. I'm also meeting my kind of feminine expectations.'"

Sexism in politics is hardly limited to one political party, with women in public life often under pressure to appear "likable" in ways that aren't expected of men. During a Democratic primary debate in 2008, a male moderator pressed Hillary Clinton on the "likability issue" in relation to her rival, Barack Obama.

"I don't think I'm that bad," Clinton responded. Obama broke in to say, "You're likable enough, Hillary."

More recently, prominent Democratic women have also sought to project toughness in their campaigns. Sharice Davids, a former mixed martial arts fighter, sparred in a 2018 ad for a Kansas congressional seat. Amy McGrath, who challenged Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell in 2020, highlighted her experience as a Marine fighter pilot.

But the dynamics are different, Dittmar said, in Republican politics, where voters tend to have more traditional views about stereotypical gender roles. That can incentivize Republican women seeking top offices to demonstrate both their toughness and femininity. She noted how former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin introduced herself as a vice presidential nominee in 2008 with a joke comparing hockey moms to a pitbull with lipstick.

"It's another way to cue" to voters that candidates are both tough and feminine, Dittmar said.

Haley's formal announcement in Charleston, South Carolina, on Wednesday was peppered with examples. A congressman described Haley as leading with "an iron fist in a velvet glove." The mother of Otto Warmbier, the young American who died after he was held and tortured in North Korea, said Haley taught her how to fight but also checked on her with the compassion of a fellow mom. And Haley herself called on voters to send "a tough-as-nails woman to the White House."

Deputies suspended in Nichols case didn't keep body cams on

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP)—Two sheriff's deputies who have been suspended for five days for their role in the arrest of Tyre Nichols failed to keep their body cameras activated after they went to the location where Nichols had been beaten by five Memphis police officers, officials said late Wednesday.

Shelby County Sheriff's Office deputies Jeremy Watkins and Johntavious Bowers each violated multiple policies after they reported to the location of Nichols' violent arrest on Jan. 7, Sheriff Floyd Bonner said in a statement.

Nichols had fled a traffic stop but was caught near his home by Memphis Police Department officers who punched him, kicked him and hit him with a baton, police video footage and other documents showed.

Video released by the city showed several law enforcement officers standing around as Nichols struggled with serious injuries while he sat on the ground, propped up against a police car. Nichols was taken to a hospital in an ambulance that left the location of the beating 27 minutes after emergency medical technicians arrived, authorities have said.

Nichols died at a hospital on Jan. 10. Five Memphis officers accused of beating Nichols have been fired and charged with second-degree murder. One other Memphis officer has been fired but not charged criminally for his role in the traffic stop that preceded the beating.

The sheriff's office previously had said two deputies who went to the scene after Nichols was beaten had been disciplined and were under investigation. But the county law enforcement office had not divulged further details, including their names and the actions they took — or did not take.

Reports released by the sheriff's office late Thursday showed Bowers and Watkins were suspended for five days without pay for failing to keep their body cameras and in-car video turned on while they were at the arrest location.

The deputies also did not notify dispatch or their supervisor, the reports showed. Watkins also did not report on his daily log that he went to the arrest location, according to the reports.

Asia

China blasts US over response to Chinese balloon incursion

BEIJING (AP)—China's ceremonial parliament has accused American lawmakers of trampling on the sovereignty of other nations after the U.S. passed a measure condemning a suspected Chinese spy balloon's intrusion into U.S. airspace.

The statement issued Thursday by the National People's Congress's Foreign Affairs Committee repeated Beijing's insistence that the balloon was an unmanned civilian weather research airship, a claim the U.S. has dismissed citing its flight route and payload of surveillance equipment.

While China at first expressed regret over the Feb. 4 incident, it has toughened its rhetoric in a further sign of how badly relations between the sides have deteriorated in recent years.

On Wednesday, the Foreign Ministry said it will take measures against U.S. entities somehow related to the downing of the balloon, without giving details.

The resolution earlier passed unanimously by the U.S. House of Representatives "deliberately exaggerated the 'China threat,'" the Foreign Relations Committee statement said.

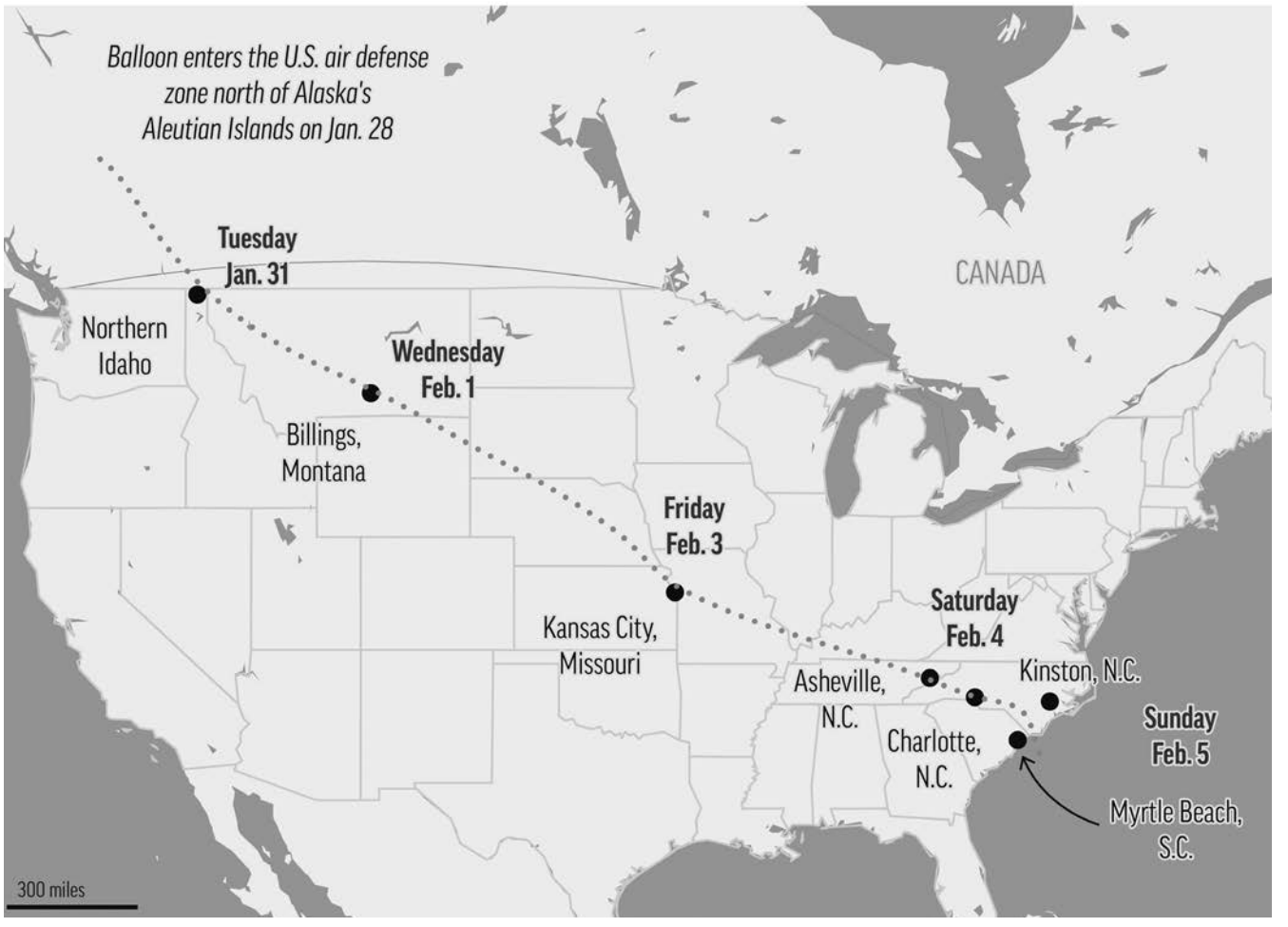
That was "purely malicious hype and political manipulation," it said. "Some U.S. Congress politicians fanned the flames, fully exposing their sinister designs to oppose China and contain China."

"In fact, it is the United States that wantonly interferes in other countries' internal affairs, violates their sovereignty, and conducts surveillance on other countries," it said.

A range of Chinese government departments have issued daily protests over how the U.S. handled the issue, accusing Washington of overreacting and violating "the spirit of international law." Beijing has offered no details on what company or government department was responsible for the giant balloon, the remnants of which are being sent to an FBI lab for analysis.

Along with Congress's passing of the resolution, the U.S. has sanctioned six Chinese entities it said are linked to Beijing's aerospace programs. Secretary of State Antony Blinken also canceled a visit to Beijing, putting an abrupt freeze on what some had seen as momentum for a stabilization in relations that have plunged to their lowest in decades amid disputes over trade, human rights, Taiwan and China's claim to the South China Sea.

The House resolution condemned China for a "brazen violation" of U.S. sovereignty and efforts to "deceive the international community through false claims about its intelligence collection campaigns."



Map shows path of suspected spy balloon. AP

Philippines quake causes hospital evacuation, minor damage

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—A strong earthquake rocked a central Philippine province on Thursday, sending people out of their homes at night, prompting dozens of patients to be evacuated from a hospital and causing minor damage to a government coliseum and business establishments, officials said.

There were no immediate reports of injuries or major damage from the magnitude 6 quake that was set off by a local fault line at a depth of 10 kilometers (6 miles), about 11 kilometers (6.8 miles) west of the coastal town of Batuan in Masbate province, officials said.

The quake struck about two hours after midnight, rousing many people from their sleep, Masbate provincial disaster-mitigation officer Adonis Dilao said.

"The first jolt was really strong followed by shaking that woke me up and my baby," Red Cross officer MJ Oxemer told The Associated Press by telephone from the provincial capital of Masbate city. "We could hear the rumbling of the ground."

Dozens of patients from a Masbate provincial hospital were evacuated but later brought back after the quake caused some cracks in the three-story building. A part of the ceiling on a small government coliseum in Masbate city was also damaged, Dilao said.

Cracks were also spotted in the concrete pillars of some business establishments, including grocery and drug stores in Masbate city's downtown area, and in some houses, Dilao told The AP by telephone.

Although business owners have discretion when to reopen, Dilao said they should heed the advice of government safety inspectors because at least two strong aftershocks were felt following the quake. "Unlike typhoons, which can be predicted to give people time to brace, earthquakes can just suddenly hit," he said.

The quake knocked out power in many areas of Masbate and nearby Ticao island, and some school classes were suspended, the Office of Civil Defense said, adding that damage assessments by local officials were underway.

The Philippines lies along the Pacific "Ring of Fire," an arc of faults around the Pacific Ocean where most of the world's earthquakes occur. Each year it is also hit by about 20 typhoons and tropical storms, making it one of the world's most disaster-prone countries.

A magnitude 7.7 quake killed nearly 2,000 people in the northern Philippines in 1990.

ASIAN BRIEFS

S. Korea: Unlikely that Kim's daughter groomed as successor

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—South Korea on Wednesday said that it's still premature to determine whether the recently unveiled daughter of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is being groomed as her father's successor. Speculation about the status of Kim's daughter, reportedly named Kim Ju Ae and aged about 10, has further intensified since she recently took center stage at a massive military parade in Pyongyang and appeared in soon-to-be-released postal stamps — both events with her all-powerful father. During a parliamentary committee meeting in Seoul, Unification Minister Kwon Youngse, South Korea's top official on North Korea, questioned a belief that she's being primed as the North's next leader. Kwon cited Kim Jong Un's relatively young age—Kim turned 39 last month—and North Korea's male-dominated power hierarchy. "There are views that (her appearances) are aimed at talking about a hereditary power transition. But considering Kim Jong Un's age and the fact that North Korea has a much more patriarchal nature than ours, there are also lots of questions about whether North Korea having a woman (prepared to) inherit power now is indeed right," Kwon told lawmakers.

One of 12 boys rescued from Thai cave dies at British school

BANGKOK (AP)—One of the 12 boys rescued from a flooded cave in Thailand in 2018 after being trapped for more than two weeks has died in England, where he was attending a sports academy, the foundation sponsoring his studies said Wednesday.

Duangphet "Dom" Phromthep, 17, was found unconscious Sunday in his room at the Brooke House College Football Academy in Leicestershire and was taken to a hospital where he died Tuesday, Thailand's Zico Foundation said. The school also confirmed his death. "This event has left our college community deeply saddened and shaken," school principal Ian Smith said in a statement. "We unite in grief with all of Dom's family, friends, former teammates and those involved in all parts of his life, as well as everyone affected in any way by this loss in Thailand and throughout the college's global family." Former Thai national team captain and coach Kiatisuk Senamuang, who heads the Zico Foundation, said in an online news conference that he did not know the cause of death and that Dom had apparently been in good health. Dom was the captain of the Wild Boars, a youth soccer team in the northern Thai province of Chiang Rai. Twelve members of the team, ages 11 to 16, and their coach were exploring the Tham Luang cave complex in June 2018 when they were trapped by rapidly rising floodwaters. A massive search and rescue operation involving international divers was launched.

Pakistan nabs 50 men in weekend killing of blasphemy suspect

LAHORE, Pakistan (AP)—Pakistan's police arrested at least 50 suspects in the kidnapping and lynching of a man already detained on charges of blasphemy, officials said Monday. A mob of hundreds of enraged Muslims descended on the police station in the Nankana district of eastern Punjab province on Saturday. Members of the mob had been alerted that a man identified only as Waris desecrated a copy of Islam's holy book, the Quran. According to the district police chief, Babar Sarfraz Alpa, the mob had accused Waris of pasting images of himself, his wife and a knife on pages of the book, displaying and throwing them in the streets. Charges of blasphemy carry the death penalty under Pakistani law. Officials said the mob stormed the Warburton police station on Saturday. Some used a wooden ladder to climb a wall and open the main gate, allowing the mob to enter. By the time police reinforcement could reach the scene to save the prisoner's life, the mob had already lynched him and were about to burn his body. Police dispersed the crowd.

World

UN appeals for $397 million to help Syrian quake survivors

UNITED NATIONS (AP)—The United Nations chief launched a $397 million appeal Tuesday to help nearly 5 million survivors of last week's devastating earthquake in rebel-held northwest Syria who have received very little assistance because of deep divisions exacerbated by the country's 12-year war.

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres announced the appeal a day after he welcomed an agreement between the U.N. and Syrian President Bashar Assad to open two new crossing points from Turkey for an initial period of three months. The U.N. has only been allowed to deliver aid to the northwest Idlib area through a single crossing at Bab Al-Hawa—at Syrian ally Russia's insistence. Since the quake, the U.N. says 84 trucks have gone through Bab Al-Hawa.

Guterres said the devastation from the magnitude 7.8 earthquake that ravaged southern Turkey and northwestern Syria on Feb. 6 "is one of the worst in recent memory," and "we all know that lifesaving aid has not been getting in at the speed and scale needed."

AP

People who lost their houses in the devastating earthquake, lineup to receive aid supplies at a makeshift camp, in Iskenderun city, southern Turkey, Tuesday, Feb. 14, 2023.

He said the $397 million will provide "desperately needed, life-saving relief for nearly 5 million Syrians—including shelter, health care, food and protection" for three months.

Guterres said the U.N. is in the final stages of preparing an emergency appeal for quake-ravaged southern Turkey. U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said the appeal will be launched "probably in the coming days."

He urged the international community to provide the emergency funding without delay, saying: "The human suffering from this epic natural disaster should not be made even worse by man-made obstacles—access, funding, supplies."

The secretary-general said aid to Syria must get through by all routes to all areas without restrictions.

A senior U.N. World Food Program official warned that food insecurity in afflicted parts of Syria had been rising drastically even before the earthquake struck.

"It was very bad before. Now it's dramatic," said Corinne Fleischer, the agency's Middle East Director.

"Half of the population faces hunger. And that's the worst that we've seen since the beginning of the crisis in Syria. Even at the height of the war, we didn't have 12 million people food insecure," she said in an interview with the Associated Press.

Guterres announced that an 11-truck convoy was on the move to go through one of the newly opened crossings at Bab Al-Salam, "with many more to come." He said the second new crossing at Al Raée is also open, "and goods are flowing."

Dujarric said the convoy went through the crossing without any obstacles and "we're very optimistic that things will move quickly." He noted that the two crossings have been used by relief organizations not affiliated with the U.N. and the roads are in better condition than those leading to Bab Al-Hawa.

The announcement of the two additional crossings from Turkey came as the U.N. Security Council was meeting for the first time Monday afternoon on the difficulties of getting aid to northwest Syria.

The U.N. has also been trying to send a convoy to the northwest across conflict lines within Syria, but it hasn't gotten a green light from all parties. The convoy has reportedly been blocked by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, a rebel group with ties to al-Qaida that controls part of the northwest.

France's U.N. ambassador, Nicolas De Riviere, told reporters before Monday's council meeting that there were two options—either the Syrian government grant additional access to the northwest or the council would try to adopt a resolution authorizing additional crossing points to the region.

After the meeting and the announcement of the two new crossings, De Riviere said there should be no "obstacles" to delivering aid through the three crossings. If there are, he said, the Security Council should look into adopting a resolution under Chapter 7 of the U.N. Charter, which means it can be enforced militarily, to authorize the crossings and get aid to the millions in need.

U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield said the United States will be watching closely to see if aid is getting to Syrians in need and will push for a U.N. resolution if it isn't. "It took seven days to get this decision to allow the borders to be open—that decision should have been made on day one," she said.

WORLD BRIEFS

Israel demolishes West Bank home of Palestinian attacker

HEBRON, West Bank (AP)—Israeli forces demolished the home on Thursday of a Palestinian behind a deadly shooting in the occupied West Bank, as tensions surge in the region over the Israeli government's policies and continued bloodshed. The military said the demolition was carried out after an Israeli court rejected appeals to spare the residence. The home, in the flashpoint West Bank city of Hebron, was demolished in a controlled explosion. A flash and then grey tufts of smoke were seen emerging from the apartment in the early morning hours. Israel says home demolitions are meant to deter future attackers but critics say they amount to collective punishment against the families of assailants and only exacerbate tensions with Palestinians. In the fatal shooting incident last year, Muhammed Kamel al-Jabari opened fire at the entrance to an Israeli settlement in the occupied West Bank, killing an Israeli man and wounding several civilians before a security guard shot him dead.

Paraguay leader praises Taiwan as 'lighthouse of democracy'

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP)—The outgoing president of Paraguay, whose country is one of Taiwan's few remaining diplomatic allies, spoke of his admiration for the island democracy while on a state visit to Taipei on Thursday. Mario Abdo Benitez was welcomed with an honor guard as he walked alongside Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen on a red carpet in front of the Presidential House. Abdo arrived in Taiwan on Tuesday on a five-day visit. Taiwan is closely watching as Paraguay is set to hold presidential elections in which the opposition party candidate has said he would break diplomatic ties with Taiwan if elected, according to local media reports. Since Tsai was elected in 2016, China has been on a pressure campaign to poach the island's remaining diplomatic allies. China claims self-ruled Taiwan as part of its territory and opposes any form of exchange between Taiwan and the governments of other countries. Taiwan currently has 14 diplomatic allies. "I want to express my deepest and most sincere respect to the Taiwanese people for not giving up their brave struggle for freedom and the safeguarding of their sovereignty," Abdo said. "In the face of continued threats and the tense situation, Taiwan's people have not given up their resolution for peace, continuing to play the role of a lighthouse of democracy in the region."

Rise in Horn of Africa migration a worry, says UN official

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP)—The numbers of women and children migrating from the Horn of Africa to Gulf countries through Yemen has significantly increased and is a cause of concern, according to the head of the International Organization for Migration. The treacherous journey from Ethiopia, Somalia and Djibouti through Yemen, called the Eastern Migration Route, has seen a 64% increase in the past year of people seeking better livelihoods, with larger numbers of women with children and children travelling alone, IOM Director General Antonio Vitorino told The Associated Press. Climate change is a driver of the increased migration, he said. In the past, women and children would often opt out of the dangerous journey through the desert mostly made on foot. Previously men would leave their families behind and make the trek in the hope of finding jobs and sending money back home. "The pressure is mounting" as the numbers of migrants rise, said Vitorino who was in Kenya for the launch of a $84 million appeal to support more than 1 million migrants using the route through Yemen.

How Ukraine war has shaped US planning for possible China clash

WASHINGTON (AP)—As the war rages on in Ukraine, the United States is doing more than supporting an ally. It's learning lessons—with an eye toward a possible clash with China.

No one knows what the next U.S. major military conflict will be or whether the U.S. will send troops—as it did in Afghanistan and Iraq—or provide vast amounts of aid and expertise, as it has done with Ukraine.

But China remains America's biggest concern. U.S. military officials say Beijing wants to be ready to invade the self-governing island of Taiwan by 2027, and the U.S. remains the island democracy's chief ally and supplier of defense weapons.

While there are key differences in geography and in U.S. commitment to come to Taiwan's defense, "there are clear parallels between the Russian invasion of Ukraine and a possible Chinese attack on Taiwan," a Center for Strategic and International Studies report found last month.

A look at some of the lessons from the Ukraine war and how they could apply to a Taiwan conflict:

ARM IN ADVANCE

Soon after Russian troops crossed into Ukraine last February, the U.S. and allies began sending massive amounts of weapons across the border from partner nations.

But Taiwan would need to be fully armed in advance, CSIS found in dozens of war scenarios it ran for its report.

"The 'Ukraine model' cannot be replicated in Taiwan because China can isolate the island for weeks or even months," CSIS found. "Taiwan must start the war with everything it needs."

Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks said Ukraine "was more of a cold-start approach than the planned approach we have been working on for Taiwan, and we will apply those lessons."

Hicks told The Associated Press that an amphibious landing is the hardest military operation to undertake. And re-supply will be difficult, particularly if China chokes off ocean access.

STOCKPILE WOES

But the Pentagon can't pre-position equipment it doesn't have. Ukraine is putting intense pressure on the U.S. and European defense stockpiles and exposing that neither was ready for a major conventional conflict.

For some items "we have weaknesses in both our inventory and our production capacity," said CSIS International Security Program senior adviser Mark Cancian, an author of the Taiwan report. "In a couple of places, particularly artillery ammunition, it could become a crisis," he said.

Off The Wall

Polish mother of 7 successfully gives birth to quintuplets

WARSAW, Poland (AP)—A Polish mother of seven has successfully given birth to premature quintuplets, hospital officials in southern Poland said Tuesday.

The two boys and three girls were born through cesarean section Sunday, in the pregnancy's 28th week, at the University Hospital in Krakow.

Weighing between 710-1,400 grams (25-49 ounces,) they were all put in incubators and given breathing support, but doctors said they are all doing fine, given their premature birth.

The quintuplets' mother, Dominika Clarke, 37, told a news conference in Krakow Tuesday that she was feeling "much better than I had expected."

"If you have a system, a calm approach and a positive attitude, then it is possible to have a really cool life with such a large bunch of children," Clarke said.

Clarke and her British husband's other children are aged between 10 months and 12 years, and include two pairs of twins.

KAROLINA FOK/ARCHIVE

Handout picture made available Tuesday, Feb. 14, 2023 shows one of the quintuplets, born on Sunday in the University Hospital in Krakow, Poland. (Karolina Fok/Archive, The University Hospital, Krakow/www.su.krakow.pl via AP)

Auburn student wins car in a long-putt contest at Bama game

AUBURN, Ala. (AP)—In a game where Auburn struggled with its 3-point accuracy, the best long shot of the afternoon by far belonged to a student in the stands.

During a timeout in the second half of the game against No. 3 Alabama on Saturday, sophomore Craig Noyes made a full-court, 94-foot putt to win a new car.

Not bad for someone who said he's not a golfer.

"Honestly, my main goal was just not to whiff or shank it into the bench," Noyes told The Associated Press.

"It was so loud when I stepped up to the ball. Once I hit it, I completely zoned out. I couldn't hear anyone," he said. "It wasn't until the announcer put a hand on my shoulder and said I'd won a car that I believed it."

The sold-out crowd at Neville Arena erupted when he became the first person to win the contest since 2014. Noyes, who writes for the student-run paper The Auburn Plainsman, high-fived fans in celebration.

Noyes went baseline-to-baseline with his winning putt, rolling the ball through a small hole in a poster at the opposite end to win a car in the contest sponsored by a local Toyota dealership.

The 20-year-old Noyes, from Kensington, Maryland, said he and some friends camped outside the arena for about 24 hours to get prime seats for the game against the in-state rival Crimson Tide. Around halftime, he was randomly picked as the day's contestant to shoot during an under-12 TV timeout.

"I was in the tunnel for about 15 minutes, swinging the club and trying to stay loose and relaxed," he said. "I was so nervous."

Noyes instantly heard from a lot of people after the winning shot, saying his phone ran out of juice on the way back to his campus house.

UK: Thief admits stealing thousands of chocolate Easter eggs

LONDON (AP)—A man who prosecutors said broke into a U.K. industrial park to steal almost 200,000 chocolate Easter eggs has pleaded guilty to theft and criminal damage.

Prosecutors said Tuesday that Joby Pool, 32, used a metal grinder to break through a gate at an industrial park in Telford, central England, on Saturday, then used a stolen semi truck to tow away a trailer loaded with Cadbury Creme Eggs and other chocolate goods worth more than 31,000 pounds ($38,000).

West Mercia Police tweeted Monday that shortly after the break-in, officers stopped a vehicle "presumably purporting to be the Easter bunny" on a highway and arrested a man on suspicion of theft.

Prosecutor Owen Beale said Pool gave up when he realized police were after him.

Pool "walked towards the police with his hands up. He was arrested and the load was recovered," Beale said.

He added that Pool had planned the theft and that he had previous convictions for handling stolen goods.

Pool entered guilty pleas to theft of a trailer, theft of its contents and criminal damage to a chain lock. He is expected to be sentenced next month.

Owl escapes from Central Park Zoo, eludes NYPD, zookeepers

NEW YORK (AP)—An owl at the Central Park Zoo flew the coop after someone vandalized its exhibit by cutting through stainless steel mesh, zoo officials said Friday.

The Eurasian eagle-owl named Flaco was discovered missing at 8:30 p.m. Thursday and remained on the loose Friday, zoo spokesperson Max Pulsinelli said.

New York Police Department officers tried to catch the bird after it was spotted on Fifth Avenue Thursday night, but it flew off.

The owl returned to Central Park at sunrise Friday and spent the day high up in a tree there.

"Our focus and effort at this time is on the safe recovery of the owl," zoo officials said in a news release. "We will issue updates as needed."

Eurasian eagle-owls are one of the larger owl species with a wingspan greater than 6 feet (180 centimeters), and have mottled brown and black feathers with distinctive ear tufts. They are not native to North America.

This one might do fine in Central Park—if it knew how to hunt, said David Barrett, an avid birder who chronicles the city's avian population via Twitter accounts including Manhattan Bird Alert and Brooklyn Bird Alert.

After years of captivity, however, "this owl has surely lost its skills for hunting," Barrett said. He estimated that the owl would starve after a day or two in the wild.

The vandalism at the New York City zoo occurred after a string of animal disappearances and other odd incidents across the country, including at the Dallas Zoo.

JULIE LARSEN MAHER

This photo, provided by the Wildlife Conservation Society, shows a Eurasion eagle-owl named Flaco that escaped from New York's Central Park Zoo after someone vandalized its exhibit by cutting through stainless steel mesh, zoo officials said Friday, Feb. 3, 2023. It was spotted on Fifth Avenue, then flew back into the park Friday morning and remained high up in a tree there for much of the day.

OFFBEAT BRIEFS

Emu escape: Flightless giant gets loose in Massachusetts

EAST BRIDGEWATER, Mass. (AP)—A large pet bird that is normally native to Australia caused a ruckus south of Boston after escaping from her home. The bird is an emu, which is the second-tallest bird on Earth after its close relative the ostrich. The flightless bird got loose on Thursday night in East Bridgewater and led police on a chase through Brockton, WCVB-TV reported. The bird's owner, Lee Flaherty, told the television station that a wild animal likely caused the emu to jump over a 6-foot (2-meter) high fence and take off. The bird, named Mallory, was eventually subdued in a parking lot by Flaherty, police and a bystander. Mallory was back in her pen after the journey, in which she traveled past Massasoit Community College and Brockton Hospital.

Debit card left during Florida robbery leads to arrest

PALM COAST, Fla. (AP)—Crime might not pay, but authorities say a criminal tried to.

Authorities arrested a Florida man who they said broke into a convenience store and took a few items, although he left his debit card behind. In a video Flagler County Sheriff Rick Staly posted to Facebook, the suspect told deputies he left his debit card so he "could come back later and pay" for the items he took. "I didn't want to steal anything, you know, that's against the law," he said in the video. Deputies responded to an alarm at a closed Palm Coast gas station in the early morning of Feb. 5, according to the Facebook post. The store owner showed deputies surveillance video, and they also located a debit card with the suspect's name on it on the counter near the register, the sheriff said. The deputies actually recognized the man in the video from a vehicle fire near the gas station earlier that night. "He must have really wanted those items to break into a closed convenience store to get them," Staly said. "Leaving a debit card behind does not absolve you from theft or committing a burglary." Deputies said they tracked the man down to return the debit card—and arrest him for burglary and theft.

Science & Technology

At 25, Backyard Bird Count shows power of citizen science

By JULIA RUBIN
Associated Press

AP

This image provided by Macaulay Library/Cornell Lab of Ornithology shows two girls watching birds through a window with binoculars, bird lists and cameras in Elm Grove, Louisiana, during the Great Backyard Bird Count in February 2022.

It's a given that when the Great Backyard Bird Count begins Friday, Steve and Janet Kistler of Hart County, Kentucky, will be joining in. They've done so every year since the now-global tradition began 25 years ago.

For Moira Dalibor, a middle-school math teacher a couple hours away in Lexington, this will be the first count. She's leading a group of students and parents to an arboretum for an exercise in data-gathering.

They're expected to be among hundreds of thousands of people around the world counting and recording over four days, Feb. 17-20. Last year, about 385,000 people from 192 countries took part in the Great Backyard Bird Count, or GBBC.

"Every year we see increased participation," and 2022 was a big jump, says Becca Rodomsky-Bish, the project's leader at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, in Ithaca, New York, which organizes the count along with the National Audubon Society and Birds Canada.

In India, which had the highest participation outside the U.S. last year, tens of thousands of people submitted bird checklists—a 28% increase from 2021.

This global data goes into the eBird database used by scientists for research on bird populations, which have declined sharply overall in past decades. It's part of a rise in citizen science projects in which volunteers collect data about the natural world for use by researchers.

And if it gets more people interested in bird-watching, so much the better, says Steve Kistler.

"It's fun and important to get the numbers, but it's just a joyful thing to do," says Kistler, 71, who leads bird-watching trips near his home and abroad.

Many bird-watchers use eBird year-round, and it has collected huge amounts of data—often between 1 million and 2 million bird checklists a month from around the world in the past couple of years, says Rodomsky-Bish.

Those numbers help researchers track the ups and downs of various species, which then helps determine the direction of conservation efforts.

"The net number of birds around the world—we're losing them," says Rodomsky-Bish.

A 2019 study by Cornell researchers found there were 3 billion fewer birds in North America than in 1970.

"The bad news is that the declines are coming out strong and hard in the data," Rodomsky-Bish adds. "The good news is if we didn't have that data, we wouldn't know. And that helps a lot of areas take direct action."

The pandemic contributed to the surge in interest in the GBBC and birds in general, she says.

"Birds were company during this period of isolation," she says, and observing them "is an accessible way to connect with the natural world. Birds are everywhere. You don't have to leave your house. They will come. … And they're charismatic. They're fun and fascinating to watch."

Compared to other counts—including Audubon's 123-year-old Christmas Bird Count and the Cornell Lab's Project FeederWatch—the GBBC is accessible to beginners.

How it works: Participants watch birds, whether that means looking out the window for 15 minutes or taking a longer trip to a nature area. Organizers recommend the Merlin bird ID app to distinguish birds by size, shape, song or other characteristics. Many participants also carry field guides and binoculars along with their phones.

They then enter the findings into the eBird app.

"Anyone can say, 'I can contribute to science—it's easy. I can identify one bird over a four-day period and I've done my part,'" says Rodomsky-Bish.

Counting in February, she says, provides a snapshot right before many birds start their annual migrations.

Dalibor, who teaches at the Redwood Cooperative School in Kentucky, has been preparing her classes with information about local species and practicing with the Merlin app. The kids will record bird sightings with pencils and clipboards, and parent volunteers will enter those numbers on phones.

"It'll be authentic data that we collected ourselves that real scientists are going to use. There's purpose and action behind it, which is special for them, being connected to the wider world," Dalibor says.

Waters off New England had 2nd warmest year on record in 2022

PORTLAND, Maine (AP)—The waters off New England, which are home to rare whales and most of the American lobster fishing industry, logged the second-warmest year on record last year.

The Gulf of Maine, a body of water about the size of Indiana that touches Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Canada, is warming faster than the vast majority of the world's oceans. Last year fell short of setting a new high mark for hottest year by less than half a degree Fahrenheit, said scientists with the Gulf of Maine Research Institute, a science center in Portland.

The average sea surface temperature was 53.66 degrees (12 degrees Celsius), more than 3.7 degrees above the 40-year average, the scientists said. The accelerated warming is changing an ecosystem that's host to numerous important commercial fishing industries, especially for lobsters, they said.

One implication is that the warming is driving species more associated with southern waters into the Gulf of Maine and altering its food chain, said Janet Duffy-Anderson, chief scientific officer with the institute. That includes species such as black sea bass, which prey on lobsters.

"Who will be the emergent species and who will be the species that decline is, in large part, a function of those interactions," said Duffy-Anderson. "At the moment, we're not in a period of stability."

The gulf is the nerve center of the lobster fishing business, which has recorded heavy catches over the past 10 years. However, lobster fisheries in more southern waters have collapsed, and scientists have placed the blame on warming temperatures.

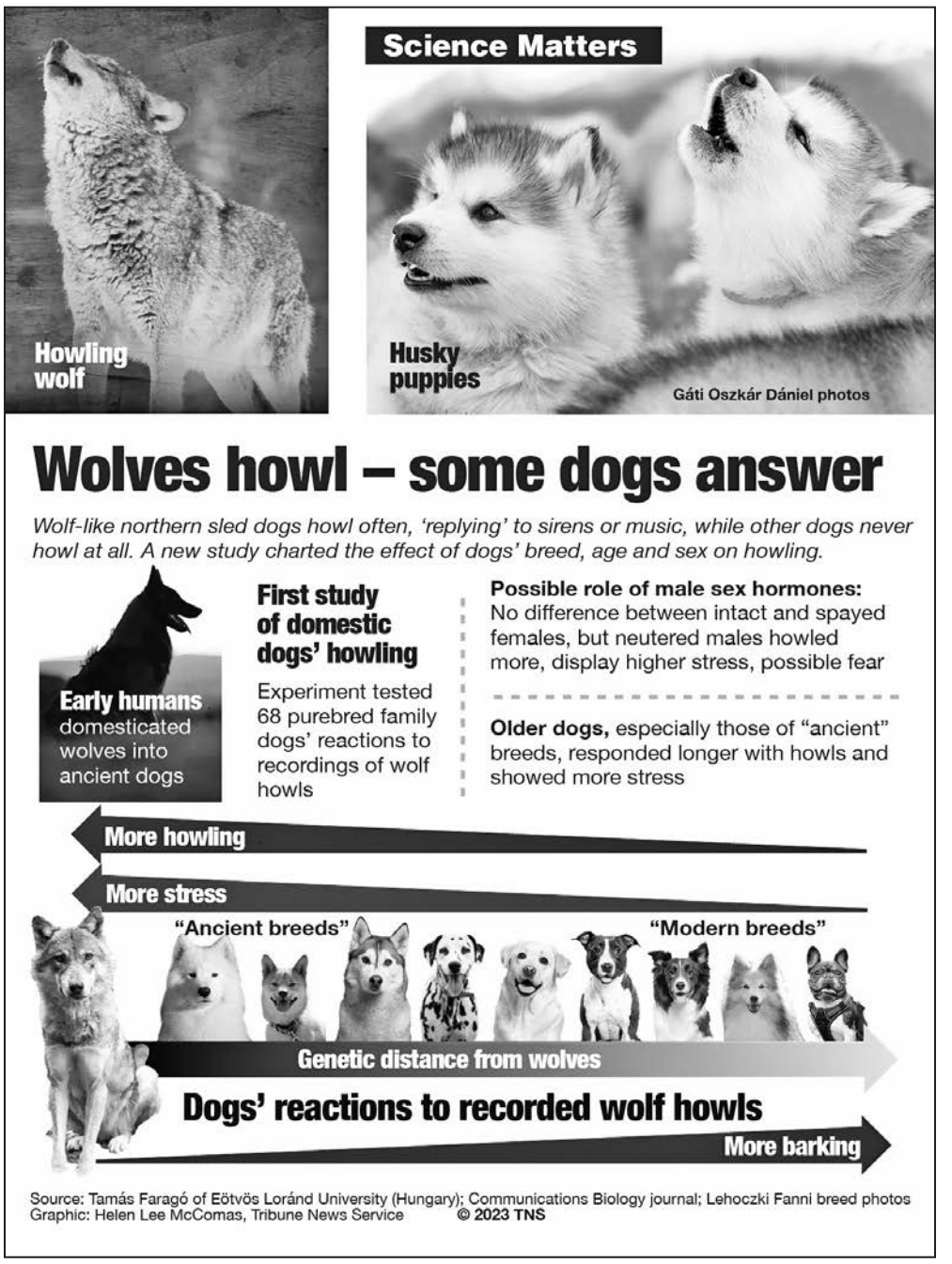
The Gulf of Maine is also a key area for marine mammals such as the North Atlantic right whale, which numbers only about 340, and sea birds such as Atlantic puffins. Those species and many others are threatened by disruptions in their food supply due to warming waters.

The environmental factors accompanying high temperatures in the Gulf of Maine include persistent, intense heatwaves, according to a report released by Gulf of Maine Research Institute on Wednesday.

The warming is also coming at a time when the world's oceans are heating up. Last year was the third-warmest year for global sea surface temperature, the report said.

"What is being observed in the Gulf of Maine (and elsewhere around the world), however, is a loss of that balance: larger fractions of recent years are experiencing above average temperatures and cold spells are becoming vanishingly rare," the report said.

The hottest year in the Gulf of Maine was 2021, according to records that go back to 1982, the institute said. That year, the average annual sea surface temperature was slightly more than 54 degrees (12.2 degrees Celsius). Last year was a fraction of a percent warmer than the third warmest year, which was 2012.


Science Matters
Howling wolf
Husky puppies
Gáti Oszkár Dániel photos
Wolves howl – some dogs answer
Wolf-like northern sled dogs howl often, 'replying' to sirens or music, while other dogs never howl at all. A new study charted the effect of dogs' breed, age and sex on howling.
Early humans domesticated wolves into ancient dogs
First study of domestic dogs' howling
Experiment tested 68 purebred family dogs' reactions to recordings of wolf howls
Possible role of male sex hormones:
No difference between intact and spayed females, but neutered males howled more, display higher stress, possible fear
Older dogs, especially those of "ancient" breeds, responded longer with howls and showed more stress
More howling
More stress
"Ancient breeds"
"Modern breeds"
Genetic distance from wolves
Dogs' reactions to recorded wolf howls
More barking
Source: Tamás Faragó of Eötvös Loránd University (Hungary); Communications Biology journal; Lehoczki Fanni breed photos
Graphic: Helen Lee McComas, Tribune News Service
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Life & Style

Hollywood sex symbol Raquel Welch dies at 82

NEW YORK (AP)—Raquel Welch, whose emergence from the sea in a skimpy, furry bikini in the film "One Million Years B.C." would propel her to international sex symbol status throughout the 1960s and '70s, has died. She was 82.

Welch died early Wednesday after a brief illness, according to her agent, Stephen LaManna of the talent agency Innovative Artists.

Welch's breakthrough came in 1966's campy prehistoric flick "One Million Years B.C.," despite having a grand total of three lines. Clad in a brown doeskin bikini, she successfully evaded pterodactyls but not the notice of the public.

"I just thought it was a goofy dinosaur epic we'd be able to sweep under the carpet one day," she told The Associated Press in 1981. "Wrong. It turned out that I was the Bo Derek of the season, the lady in the loin cloth about whom everyone said, 'My God, what a bod' and they expected to disappear overnight."

She did not, playing Lust for the comedy team of Peter Cook and Dudley Moore in their film "Bedazzled" in 1967 and playing a secret agent in the sexy spy spoof "Fathom" that same year.

AP

FILE — Raquel Welch arrives at the 2014 Carousel of Hope Ball in Beverly Hills, Calif., on Oct. 11, 2014.

Her curves and beauty captured pop culture attention, with Playboy crowning her the "most desired woman" of the '70s, despite never being completely naked in the magazine. In 2013, she graced the No. 2 spot on Men's Health's "Hottest Women of All Time" list. In the film "The Shawshank Redemption," a poster of Welch covers an escape tunnel—the last of three that character Andy Dufresne (Tim Robbins) used after Rita Hayworth and Marilyn Monroe.

Admirers took to Twitter to mourn the star, including TV host Rosie O'Donnell, actor Chris Meloni and writer-director Paul Feig, who worked with Welch on "Sabrina the Teenage Witch" and called her "Kind, funny and a true superstar whom I was pretty much in love with for most of my childhood. We've lost a true icon."

Oprah chooses Susan Cain's 'Bittersweet' for book club

NEW YORK (AP)—Oprah Winfrey has chosen Susan Cain's "Bittersweet" as her new book club pick.

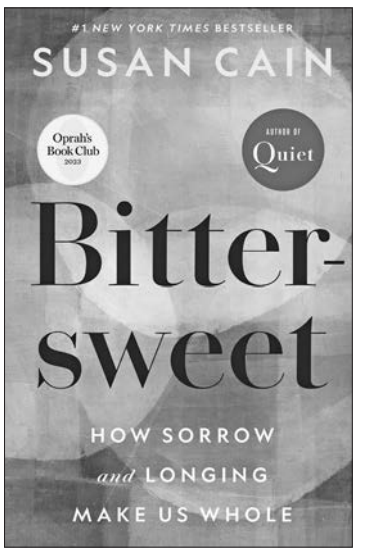
"Bittersweet," released last year, is the most recent work from the author of "Quiet," the 2012 bestseller that contended introverted people had been misunderstood and overlooked.

"Susan started a revolution a decade ago with her book 'Quiet' about the power of being an introvert, and her latest book is a revelation on how embracing sadness and heartache can lead you to the path of creativity, connection and even love," Winfrey said in a statement Wednesday.

"'Bittersweet' talks about a complicated truth around happiness and has the power to transform the way you see your life and even the world," the statement said.

Winfrey is a longtime admirer of Cain, whose other books include "Quiet Power: The Secret Strengths of Introverts" and "Quiet Journal: Discover Your Secret Strengths and Unleash Your Inner Power." In 2013, Winfrey cited "Quiet" as one of 40 books to read before age 40 and she featured "Bittersweet" last spring in her online publication OprahDaily.com.

Cain noted in a statement that in "Bittersweet" she writes of Winfrey's "transformative" relationship with her mentor Maya Angelou, who died in 2014.



HONS

This cover image released by Crown shows "Bittersweet: How Sorrow and Longing Make Us Whole" by Susan Cain. (Crown via AP)

Study shows 'striking' number who believe news misinforms

NEW YORK (AP) —Half of Americans in a recent survey indicated they believe national news organizations intend to mislead, misinform or persuade the public to adopt a particular point of view through their reporting.

The survey, released Wednesday by Gallup and the Knight Foundation, goes beyond others that have shown a low level of trust in the media to the startling point where many believe there is an intent to deceive.

Asked whether they agreed with the statement that national news organizations do not intend to mislead, 50% said they disagreed. Only 25% agreed, the study found.

Similarly, 52% disagreed with a statement that disseminators of national news "care about the best interests of their readers, viewers and listeners," the study found. It said 23% of respondents believed the journalists were acting in the public's best interests.

"That was pretty striking for us," said Sarah Fioroni, a consultant for Gallup. The findings showed a depth of distrust and bad feeling that go beyond the foundations and processes of journalism, she said.

Tyler Perry to donate $2.5M to help older Atlanta homeowners

ATLANTA (AP)—Actor and filmmaker Tyler Perry is donating $2.75 million to older homeowners in Atlanta to help ensure they're able to stay in their homes.

A few weeks ago, Perry reached out to Atlanta Mayor Andrew Dickens about providing assistance for those residents on fixed incomes who could lose their homes as a result of rising real estate taxes, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported.

Perry, ranked third among the world's highest-paid entertainers by Forbes, is going to pay the back property taxes for 300 low-income seniors in Atlanta, the newspaper said.

The assistance will cover city, county and school taxes. Perry will also cover any increase in taxes over the next 20 years for 100 low-income older residents. He has already donated $750,000 for the first year to cover the back taxes and any increase in property taxes, and has pledged $500,000 each year over the next four years to ensure the residents don't pay any more in such taxes.

Mother's attitude, jealousy create an unpleasant dynamic

DEAR ABBY: My partner and I recently had a baby, and it has created some major issues with my mom and in-laws. Mom is an unhappy person who blames others and external factors for her unhappiness. She laments her unhappiness to me. She's incredibly jealous of any time we spend with my partner's family. She makes mean comments about them to me and questions the amount of time we spend with them.

Having her in the same room as any of my partner's family is stressful. It even stresses me out when she asks me if I've seen them. We spend a lot of time with both families and see both once a week. Additionally, Mom comes over once during the week to see the baby and stay for dinner.

My partner is wonderfully supportive and kind. He continues to welcome Mom into our home and treat her well. However, I don't think it's fair to my partner to be treated poorly and to know that Mom says mean things about their family. I've tried speaking to my father about this, but he says things like, "That's how she is; you can't change someone. Just remain neutral."

I feel helpless and I'm not sure what to do—give Mom an ultimatum about her behavior, never have both families in the same room, or move far away? I tried speaking with both my parents. It didn't change her behavior. Any advice?

STRESSED OVER THIS IN WASHINGTON

DEAR STRESSED: Although you cannot change your mother's attitude, you can do something to change her behavior. The next time she questions you about the time you are spending with your partner's family, your response should be, "Mom, you already know the answer to that question. Stop asking." The next time she says something derogatory about them, tell her you are aware of how she feels, you love these people, she's making you uncomfortable and to stop. It may take repeating, but eventually you may get through. If that doesn't happen, you may wind up seeing less of her, which would be a relief.

■■■■

DEAR ABBY: I am a widow who has been in a long-term relationship with a widower. I am concerned about his relationship with his 27-year-old daughter. She wants time with him, excluding me, and he encourages it and hides it from me. Most recently, they traveled out of state together and he didn't tell me. I think this is abnormal and I find it confusing. He says she has anxiety and needs to spend time with him. Should I be concerned?

EXCLUDED IN OHIO

DEAR EXCLUDED: If your gentleman friend and his daughter have to smuggle their times together past you, there is a reason. The reason may be that you seem to disapprove of him spending alone time with his daughter. He shouldn't have to explain or make excuses for it. He's the only parent she has left. If you and he are able to have ample private time to keep your relationship flourishing, I see no reason for concern. If you can't accept that they are a package deal, find another gentleman friend.

■■■■

DEAR ABBY
BY ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

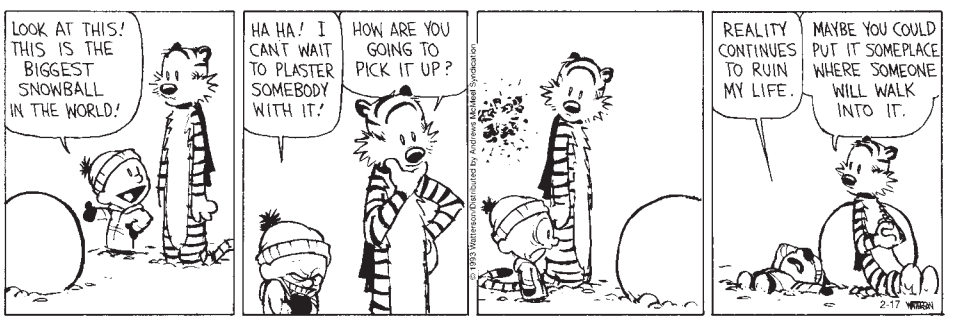
Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Good advice for everyone – teens to seniors – is in "The Anger in All of Us and How to Deal With It." To order, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Anger Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

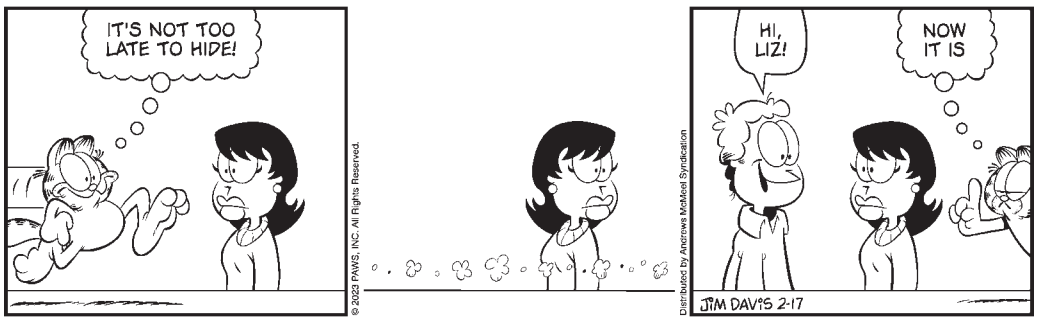
Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


LOOK AT THIS! THIS IS THE BIGGEST SNOWBALL IN THE WORLD!
HA HA! I CAN'T WAIT TO PLASTER SOMEBODY WITH IT!
HOW ARE YOU GOING TO PICK IT UP?
REALITY CONTINUES TO RUIN MY LIFE.
MAYBE YOU COULD PUT IT SOMEPLACE WHERE SOMEONE WILL WALK INTO IT.
© 1993 Watterson/Distributed by Andrews McMeel Syndication
2-17

Garfield®

By Jim Davis


IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO HIDE!
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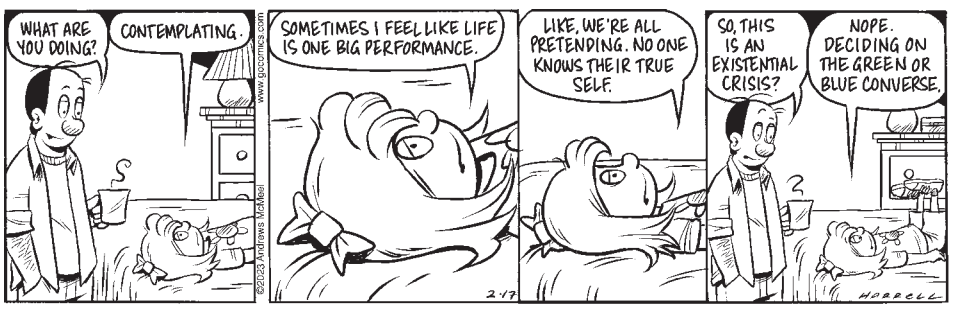
HI, LIZ!
NOW IT IS
Distributed by Andrews McMeel Syndication
JIM DAVIS 2-17

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
CONTEMPLATING.
SOMETIMES I FEEL LIKE LIFE IS ONE BIG PERFORMANCE.
LIKE, WE'RE ALL PRETENDING. NO ONE KNOWS THEIR TRUE SELF.
SO, THIS IS AN EXISTENTIAL CRISIS?
NOPE. DECIDING ON THE GREEN OR BLUE CONVERSE.
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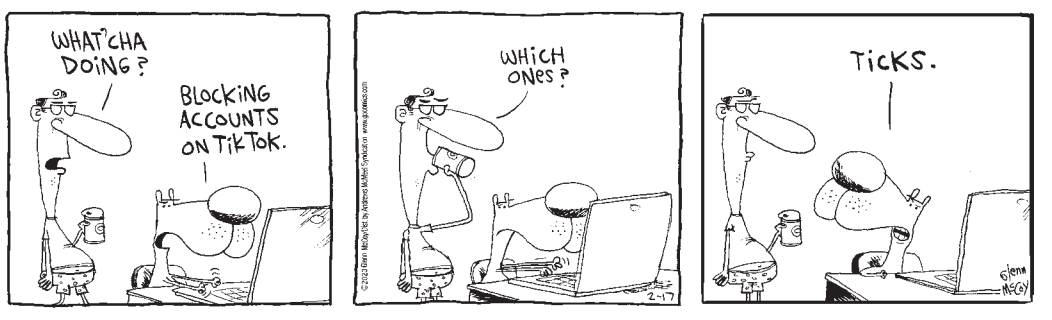
www.gocomics.com
2-17
HARRELL

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy



CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Alphabet starter
4 Persian bigwig
8 Beseech
12 Old Oldsmobile
13 Lima's land
14 Swim meet assignment
15 Yellow birds
17 Squad
18 Expulsion
19 Tool set
21 In medias —
22 Tristan's love
26 Slugger Roger
29 Charge
30 Help
31 Region
32 Refusals
33 Burden
34 Actress Vardalos
35 Entreat
36 Unkempt
37 Close, as an escape
39 Comic DeLuise
40 Mischief
41 "Reckon so"
45 "Star Wars" knight
48 They're treated in the E.R.
50 Prayer ender
51 Earth sci.
52 Stimpy's pal
53 Year-end celebration
54 Male offspring
55 Asner and Harris

DOWN

1 Not pizzicato
2 Suitor
3 Swindles
4 Shopping binges
5 Names in a will
6 "Where — you?"
7 Sled dogs
8 Disney pooch
9 Campaigned
10 Singer DiFranco
11 Even so
16 Places in the heart
20 British verb ending
23 Cambodia neighbor
24 "Buenos —!"
25 Whirlpool
26 "Death in Venice" author
27 Opera house solo
28 Caboose
29 Shore concealer
32 Rookies
33 Madagascar critter
35 Scary cry
36 Ski slope bumps
38 Basel's river
39 Mustard choice
42 Green land
43 Feeder filler
44 Taxpayer IDs
45 Comic Leno
46 Ostrich's kin
47 Tierra — Fuego
49 Sgt., e.g.

Solution time: 25 mins.

A	L	E	S	■	R	O	T	C	■	M	A	P
P	O	L	O	■	E	W	E	R	■	A	M	I
B	O	B	B	Y	F	L	A	Y	■	N	O	M
S	T	E	E	R	S	■	■	P	O	D	I	A
■	■	■	I	S	■	E	X	T	R	A	■	■
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O	R	O	■	■	O	R	A	■	■	A	R	I
E	L	L	E	■	P	L	Y	■	B	Y	T	E
■	■	■	D	R	E	S	S	■	B	O	■	■
T	Y	P	E	S	■	■	F	U	D	G	E	D
U	A	L	■	T	A	P	E	D	E	L	A	Y
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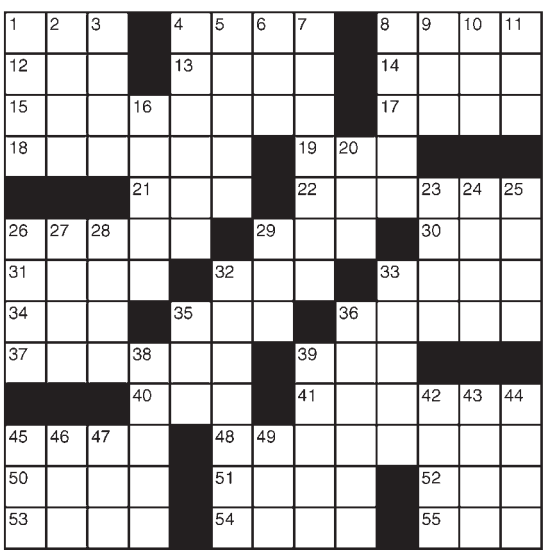
Yesterday's answer 2-17



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Deja Monique Cruz, 24; Ed Sheeran, 32; Joseph Gordon-Levitt, 42; Billie Joe Armstrong, 51.

Happy Birthday: Put your energy where it counts. Fix up your space, use what you have and be proud of who you are and what you can accomplish. Let your innovative intelligence lead the way and help you carve out your place in your community. Be a contributor and participant; make a difference. Your concern and humanitarian mindset will take you on a rewarding journey. Your numbers are 8, 15, 24, 27, 31, 34, 49.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Be careful sharing sensitive information. Get all your facts straight and consider your options before you proceed. By doing everything by the book and according to plan, you'll avoid being put in the spotlight by someone eager to make you look bad. ✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Consider your options, and don't stop doing things differently. Don't wait for others to step in and take over. A chance to help others will connect you to someone who will enrich your life. ✪✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Don't worry about what others are doing. Do your best to live in the moment, learn from your experience and react positively. Speed, coupled with intelligent maneuvers, will bring about new beginnings. Shoot for the stars. ✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Share your intentions and fine-tune a meaningful relationship. Discuss complaints, solutions and long-term goals. Experience will play a role in how things turn out between you and someone you love. Rely on your intuition to help you reach your goals. ✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Speak the truth, improve relationships and steady your cash flow. Too much of anything will set you back. Consider what matters most to you. You will find your place and peace of mind. Opportunity, coupled with energy and intelligence, equals success. ✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* You can be eager, but don't let anger take over. A change will be more beneficial than anticipated if you mix business with pleasure. A vocational change will enhance what you know and do already. Romance is on the rise. ✪✪✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Put everything in place before sharing your intentions. Asking an expert for an honest opinion will encourage you to correct any flaws that are likely to consume time and money. Act intelligently and avoid a financial or contractual loss. ✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* Invest time and thought into what you want to do next and what you'll have to learn or experience to reach your destination. A physical change will improve your appeal and boost your confidence. Romance is encouraged, and a unique partnership will flourish. ✪✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* Remember your past and the people who have been there for you. Your experience will play a role when dealing with money and partnerships. Your heart is in the right place; follow through with your plans and enjoy the moment. ✪✪✪

CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Don't wallow in what's not working for you; make the changes conducive to what you want to achieve. Turn your home into your safe place, where you can rebuild your strength and enforce plans that make you more efficient in achieving your accomplishments. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Let others do as they please, but don't be a follower. Pursue your plans and do what feels right. Put your energy into the people trying to reach the same objective. Don't tag along; be a leader. ✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Don't ignore the obvious. Check out what's available before you start, and if someone close to you has a hidden agenda, recognize what you must do. Be honest about your role in the process. An upfront attitude will stifle interference. ✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are ingenious, sporty and challenging. You are confident and supportive.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

9				8				4
			2				8	
3	6			7	4	2		9
7		1		2		3		
5			3			4		
	3						2	5
2	5							1
	7		5				3	
				4			9	2

Difficulty: ★★★★ 2-17

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Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

5	9	7	4	1	3	8	6	2
8	6	2	7	5	9	1	3	4
1	3	4	2	8	6	5	9	7
7	5	9	3	4	1	2	8	6
4	1	3	6	2	8	7	5	9
2	8	6	9	7	5	4	1	3
6	2	8	5	9	7	3	4	1
3	4	1	8	6	2	9	7	5
9	7	5	1	3	4	6	2	8

Difficulty: ★★★ 2-16

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

FEELING THE OSCAR VIBES **Solution: 6 letters**

F	Y	H	P	A	R	G	O	T	A	M	E	N	I	C
D	I	R	E	C	T	O	R	S	C	E	N	E	N	H
V	E	L	C	I	T	S	I	T	R	A	N	S	T	E
I	N	S	M	N	O	I	T	C	A	T	O	C	E	E
S	O	T	I	L	A	E	W	A	E	N	F	W	R	R
U	M	O	M	G	A	I	C	R	G	N	E	E	N	S
A	I	R	E	Ⓟ	N	C	T	N	O	E	A	I	A	D
L	N	Y	Ⓛ	N	Y	A	I	I	A	R	T	V	T	O
E	A	Ⓞ	E	D	I	T	T	R	T	D	U	R	I	O
F	Ⓣ	R	E	N	R	C	O	A	O	L	R	E	O	W
F	I	M	M	O	U	T	S	O	H	T	E	T	N	Y
E	O	E	P	D	C	J	E	W	E	L	S	N	A	L
C	N	P	O	A	E	N	I	S	U	O	M	I	L	L
T	U	R	G	N	I	L	Y	T	S	R	I	A	H	O
S	P	O	T	L	I	G	H	T	R	O	R	R	O	H

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Action, Actor, Artistic, Cheers, Cinematography, Comedy, Dance, Design, Director, Entertainment, Feature, Film, Hairstyling, Historical, Hollywood, Horror, Host, International, Interview, Jewels, Limousine, Nomination, Plot, Production, Scene, Song, Spotlight, Stage, Story, Supporting, Title, Visual Effects, Winner

Yesterday's Answer: Gorgeous

The NEW **Volume 70** can be purchased online at www.WonderWordBooks.com, or call 1-800-642-6480.

Mikal Bridges has career-high 45 points, Nets beat Heat

NEW YORK (AP) — Mikal Bridges scored a career-high 45 points, including 15 in a row for Brooklyn to break open a game that had been close for 3 1/2 quarters, and the Nets beat the Miami Heat 116-105 on Wednesday night in the final game for both teams before the All-Star break.{/span}

In his third game since coming from Phoenix in the trade for Kevin Durant, Bridges had an electrifying scoring stretch that could even match Durant. The Nets led only 90-89 before he went to work with an array of drives, 3-pointers and jumpers over the next three minutes.

That pushed the lead to nine and when another Nets player finally scored, it was a 3-pointer by fellow newcomer Cam Johnson that pushed it to 108-96.

Bridges scored 17 points in the final quarter to blow by his previous career best of 34 points. He was 17 of 24 from the field, 4 of 6 on 3s and 7 of 7 at the line, and also had eight rebounds and five assists.

Cam Thomas added 19 points and Johnson had 18 for the Nets, who won for the first time since the two former Suns joined them in the lineup.

Bam Adebayo had 24 points, 13 rebounds and six assists for the Heat. Max Strus scored 18 points.

LAKERS 120, PELICANS 102

LOS ANGELES (AP)—LeBron James had 21 points in his first game since becoming the NBA's career scoring leader, and Anthony Davis had 28 points, 10 rebounds and five assists in the new-look Los Angeles' victory over New Orleans.

Angelo Russell had 21 points and seven assists during his warm welcome home to the Lakers, who won for just the second time in six games. Los Angeles' five new players all made their home debuts after the club's busy trade deadline, and the Lakers never trailed.

Brandon Ingram scored 25 points and C.J. McCollum had 22 points and nine assists in his return from a one-game absence with a sprained right ankle for the Pelicans, who lost for only the second time in six games.

CELTICS 127, PISTONS 109

BOSTON (AP)—Jayson Tatum scored 38 points, including 24 in the third quarter, and NBA-leading Boston rolled past Detroit.

Malcolm Brogdon had 25 points off the bench, and Al Horford added 11 points and seven rebounds for Boston. Derrick White finished with 11 points and six assists.

Marcus Smart contributed nine points, seven rebounds, six assists and six steals in his first game back after missing nine with a sprained right ankle.

Bojan Bogdanovic led the Pistons with 28 points and five rebounds.

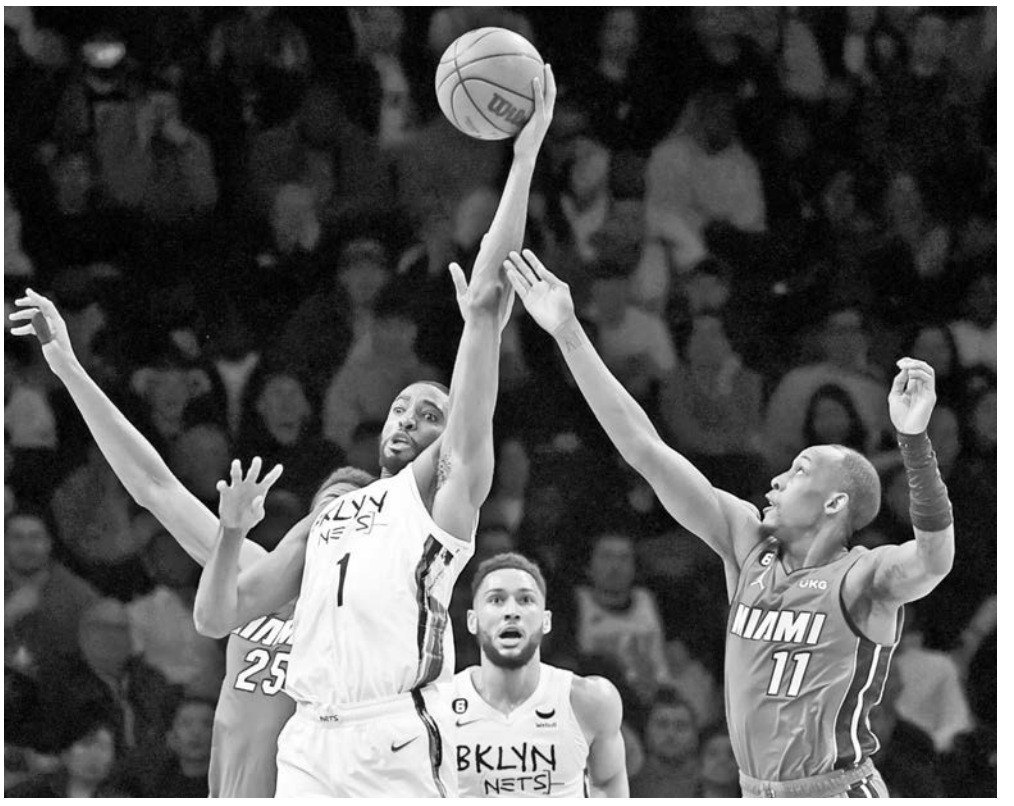
HORNETS 120, SPURS 110

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP)—LaMelo Ball had 28 points, 10 assists and a season-high 12 rebounds and Charlotte beat San Antonio to send the Spurs into the NBA All-Star break with a franchise-record 14-game losing streak.

Ball had his third triple-double of the season and franchise-leading ninth overall.

P.J. Washington continued his hot play with 22 points and 10 rebounds, and Mark Williams had 12 points, 10 rebounds and four blocked shots as Charlotte won its second straight game. The Hornets had 12 blocks in all, including five by backup center Nick Richards.

Malaki Branham had 23 points and Keldon Johnson added 21 points for the Spurs. McDermott added 17 points on five 3s.



AP

Brooklyn Nets forward Mikal Bridges (1) looks to pass the ball as Miami Heat center Orlando Robinson (25) and guard Jamaree Bouyea (11) and Nets guard Ben Simmons watch during the first half of an NBA basketball game Wednesday, Feb. 15, 2023, in New York.

NUGGETS 118, MAVERICKS 109

DENVER (AP)—Reserve Jeff Green scored a season-high 24 points, Nikola Jokic had his 21st triple-double and Western Conference-leading Denver beat short-handed Dallas.

Nikola Jokic finished with 14 points, 13 rebounds and 10 assists for the Nuggets, who moved to an NBA-best 27-4 at home this season. Michael Porter Jr. hit five 3-pointers and finished with 22 points.

Luka Doncic had 37 points in leading a banged-up Dallas team that was missing guard Kyrie Irving due to lower-back tightness. Doncic and Irving have played alongside each other in two games since Irving was acquired as part of a deal with Brooklyn on Feb. 6.

76ERS 118, CAVALIERS 112

PHILADELPHIA (AP)—Joel Embiid scored 29 points—including the 10,000th of his career—and Philadelphia beat Cleveland.

James Harden added 19 points and 12 assists to help send the 76ers into the All-Star break with their fourth straight victory. De'Anthony Melton added 18 points, and Tyrese Maxey had 16.

Donovan Mitchell had 33 points—including 25 in the second half—for the Cavaliers. They had won seven straight.

GRIZZLIES 117, JAZZ 111

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP)—Jaren Jackson had 26 points, nine rebounds and four blocks and Memphis beat Utah in the last game for both teams before the All-Star break.

Desmond Bane scored 24 points and Ja Morant had 20 points—on 8-of-26 shooting— and nine assists. Jackson also had five steals.

Kelly Olynyk led the Jazz with 28 points and 14 rebounds, and Jordan Clarkson had 20 points, nine rebounds and six assists.

Utah scoring leader Lauri Markkanen was out with right knee soreness. Then, four minutes into the game, guard Collin Sexton went out with a left hamstring injury and did not return.

PACERS 117, BULLS 113

INDIANAPOLIS (AP)—Buddy Hield made six 3-pointers in the second half and finished with 27 points, helping Indiana overcome a 24-point deficit after the first quarter to beat Chicago.

Tyrese Haliburton banked in a 9-foot shot for a 113-112 lead in the final minute, Myles Turner sank two free throws and Hield closed it out with a pair of foul shots with 7.1 seconds remaining as the Pacers snapped a five-game skid.

Aaron Nesmith scored 21 points for Indiana, which had lost 16 of 18. Turner added 17, Haliburton 16 and Bennedict Mathurin 14.

Zach LaVine scored 35 points, including 12 in the opening quarter as the Bulls took a 39-15 lead.

KNICKS 122, HAWKS 101

ATLANTA (AP)—Jalen Brunson scored 28 points, Julius Randle added 25 and New York cruised into the All-Star break with its third straight victory, blowing out Atlanta.

New York settled things right from the start. The Knicks never trailed, building a 24-point lead in the first half and leading by double digits for the final 42 minutes of the game.

De'Andre Hunter had 20 points and Trae Young 19 for Atlanta.

THUNDER 133, ROCKETS 96

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP)—Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 29 points and Oklahoma City routed Houston.

Gilgeous-Alexander was 8 of 16 on field goals and 13 of 15 on free throws. The first-time All-Star played just three quarters because Oklahoma City was up 116-78 heading into the fourth.

Jabari Smith Jr. scored 15 points for Houston. The NBA-worst Rockets have lost seven straight.

NBA announces All-Star Saturday night participants

By TIM REYNOLDS
AP Basketball Writer

Milwaukee's Giannis Antetokounmpo is teaming up with his brothers once again on All-Star Saturday. Portland's Damian Lillard is taking a third shot at the 3-point title, Indiana's Buddy Hield will aim to win that one again and Philadelphia's Mac McClung now can be a slam-dunk champion at the NBA and high school levels.

The NBA released the full list of participants for All-Star Saturday's events in Salt Lake City—the Skills Competition, the 3-point contest and the dunk contest. It'll be a particularly busy weekend for 11 players who are now slotted to be in multiple events during the three days of action in Utah.

3-POINT CONTEST

Hield, the 2020 winner, is back to try to become the eighth player with multiple 3-point crowns. He'll face his Indiana teammate Tyrese Haliburton, the Portland duo of Lillard and Anfernee Simons, Miami's Tyler Herro, Sacramento's Kevin Huerter, Utah's Lauri Markkanen and Boston's Jayson Tatum.

Huerter is one of four Kings picked to be part of the weekend.

"It's exciting to be part of it and to help represent the Kings at All-Star weekend," Huerter said. "We're off to a great start, we can't wait to see what this weekend is about and then we can't wait to get back to work."

Herro said he's eager to get to Salt Lake City.

"I'm excited. I'm going to try to win it," the Heat guard said. "I'm just going to be me and I'll be good. Shooters shoot."

SKILLS CHALLENGE

Antetokounmpo is an All-Star captain, and will choose a team to oppose the squad that will be picked Sunday night by fellow captain LeBron James.

But first, he'll be teaming up with his brothers—Thanasis and Alex—in the Skills Challenge, just as he did in last year's event at Cleveland. They'll face two other teams, one from the host Utah Jazz and the other composed of three top picks in last year's draft.

The Jazz will be represented by Jordan Clarkson, Walker Kessler and Collin Sexton. And Team Rooks is composed of No. 1 pick Paolo Banchero of Orlando, No. 3 pick Jabari Smith Jr. of Houston and No. 5 pick Jaden Ivey of Detroit.

It's a four-round competition, the first three involve shooting, passing and a relay. The top two teams after those events will then shoot half-court shots to decide a winner.

DUNK CONTEST

McClung won an All-American high school dunk contest in 2018, and will be joined in the NBA dunk field by Houston's Kenyon Martin Jr., New Orleans' Trey Murphy III and New York's Jericho Sims.

BUSY WEEKENDS

Giannis Antetokounmpo will be in two events at the All-Star weekend, with the skills event followed by the All-Star Game itself the next night.

Also in both All-Star Saturday and the All-Star Game: Tatum, Haliburton, Lillard and Markkanen.

It'll be a doubleheader weekend for six other players scheduled to take part in both Friday's Rising Stars games and the All-Star Saturday events: Ivey, Smith, Murphy, McClung, Banchero and Kessler.

REFEREES

John Goble, Mark Lindsay and Michael Smith were announced Tuesday as referees for Sunday's All-Star Game.

The tasks of officiating the Rising Stars games and the All-Star Saturday events will be handled by Brandon Adair, Ashley Moyer-Gleich and CJ Washington.

SNUBBED

Brooklyn, Charlotte and Washington have no representatives heading to All-Star weekend. For the Nets, it's a technicality—Kyrie Irving and Kevin Durant were both selected as All-Stars this year while they played for the Nets, and both have subsequently been traded.

‘Our own dynasty’: Kansas City fetes latest Super Bowl win

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP)— Quarterback Patrick Mahomes and All-Pro tight end Travis Kelce promised thousands of fans celebrating the Kansas City Chiefs’ Super Bowl championship Wednesday that the team will be back for more.

During a boisterous victory rally at downtown’s Union Station after a parade, Mahomes and Kelce joked about “experts” who predicted the just-concluded NFL season would be a rebuilding year for the Chiefs, who defeated the Philadelphia Eagles 38-35 on Sunday.

“We’re back again, we’re back again,” Mahomes, the NFL’s regular season and Super Bowl MVP, told thousands of cheering fans clad in the Chiefs’ red and gold team colors.

“When we started this season the AFC West said we were rebuilding,” Mahomes said. “I’ll be honest with you, I don’t know what rebuilding means. In our rebuilding year, we’re world champs, we’re world champs.”

Kelce noted that some “haters” predicted the Chiefs wouldn’t even make the playoffs.

“In all reality, this was this best season of my life,” Kelce said. “I owe it to (the fans), I owe it to the guys on this stage, I owe it to everybody in Chiefs Kingdom and the organization we’ve been able to create.”

Celebrating his second Super Bowl win with the Chiefs, coach Andy Reid told the crowd that “there’s no place you’d rather be, and no greater place to be than right here, baby. ... Not very often are you able to say you’re the greatest team in the world, you have the greatest players in the world, have the greatest organization in the world and, most of all, the greatest fans in the world.”

AP

Kansas City Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes and teammates react to the crowd during the Chiefs’ victory celebration and parade in Kansas City, Mo., Wednesday, Feb. 15, 2023.

The rally festivites wrapped up a day that began with some fans who slept overnight — and others arriving before sunrise —to get a prime spot downtown to celebrate the Chiefs’ second Super Bowl championship in four NFL seasons.

Players, coaches, team officials, family members and others rode double-decker buses past legions of fans, sometimes standing up to 10 people deep, as the parade rolled down a main downtown street on the way to the Union Station rally.

Many players got off the buses to dance, sign autographs, take selfies and occasionally hand out beers to supporters along the route. Some lucky fans were able to touch the Lombardi Trophy, which denoted the Chiefs’ win.

Most schools, many businesses and some government offices in the Kansas City metro area were closed to allow fans to enjoy the festivities. Most were in good spirits while waiting in long lines for food trucks, merchandise trucks and, of course, portable toilets. Police did not immediately report any major problems during the event.

After decades of championship drought, the city is gaining experience with victory parades. Four seasons ago, the Chiefs defeated the San Francisco 49ers for the team’s first Super Bowl championship in 50 years. That followed the Kansas City Royals winning the World Series in 2015, the city’s first baseball championship in 30 years.

Shellie Diehl, 46, of Kansas City, was seated about a block from Union Station, joined by her 8-year-old daughter, Skyler; 16-year-old daughter, Taylor; and a friend. Diehl said she came to the Chiefs parade in 2020 and decided to have mother-daughter time on Wednesday while celebrating Skyler’s first parade.

“The last one was so much fun, we decided we had to come to this one,” Diehl said. “We’re big Chiefs fans, and we wanted to celebrate a great day with the community.”

Some fans admitted that Kansas City might be getting a little spoiled.

“Kind of getting used to it, but that’s OK,” said Liz Barber, 50, of Shawnee, Kansas. “It is good.”

“We had a 50-year-drought, so it’s about time we had our own dynasty,” said David Cordray, 38, of Kansas City.

Some 25 Chiefs fans who arrived about 6 a.m. cooked up a breakfast feast, complete with corn on the cob, bacon and potatoes and all the trimmings — and they had steaks ready for later in the day. Dominic Zamora, 18, said the group of friends were continuing a tailgating tradition at Chiefs games.

“With Mahomes, there’s more to come,” Zamora said. “It’s going to be fun, and I’m excited to show up.”

Manuel Palacio, 48, was dressed in a cow’s suit in a tribute to Kansas City’s “Cowtown” nickname. He said he was a longtime Buffalo Bills fan who converted to the Chiefs after losing a bet with a Chiefs fan.

“I had to convert,” Palacio said. “It’s like being an Oakland Raiders fan; at some point you have to cheer for the team who keeps winning,” he said, laughing.

Officials began planning the parade weeks before the Chiefs defeated the Eagles on a field goal with 8 seconds remaining in the game. Kansas City police said about 675 law enforcement officers from more than 20 agencies, along with fire departments and transportation officials, were deployed for Wednesday’s event.

The City Council Transportation and Infrastructure Committee earmarked $750,000 for parade-related expenses, while Mayor Quinton Lucas estimated overtime costs for police and firefighters would total more than $1.5 million. The Kansas City Sports Commission was expected to contribute another $1 million in private donations for parade expenses and sponsorships, and the Jackson County Legislature voted to add $75,000.

MANTAS

From Page 24

sides of the court as the Mantas couldn’t really shake off the Knights just yet.

Mantas’ John Kae Raquepo then gave the team a headstart after being fouled twice but it was an eye-for-an-eye as the Mantas fouled Lerio as well.

It was a free for all from then on with Garcia still making deadly aim of the target followed closely behind by Lerio, always closing the gap by 2 or 4 points.

Toward the end of the game though, the Mantas had pulled further away into the lead as Asuo and Jezpher Navarro tossed in a couple of 3-pointers complementing Garcia’s.

The Mantas pulled out all the stops with the final minutes ticking by and were not phased even as the Knights tried to engage in a catch-up game. It was a little too late for them as time ran out and the boys hugged it out in a show of good sportsmanship.

Even with the loss, Lerio went home with 28 big ones, followed by a longshot of teammates Jay Francis Pineda’s 6, Sasamoto’s 5, and San Nicolas’ 4.

Garcia swished the basket in honor of Michael Jordan’s jersey number (23), followed by Asuo and Raquepo’s twinning 10 markers, and Lucero’s 8.

In the Dolphins-Geckos game right after, the mammals quickly established a huge double-digit lead against the reptiles in the first half and never once stepped on the brakes.

Led by Charlz Sanchez, the Dolphins early on had the advantage and never let it go. At the end of the first half, Sanchez banked 8, while Aiden Norita had 6 markers, as the Dolphins had the 30-6 lopsided lead.

Just as the first half, it was a walk in the park for the Dolphins in the second as the Geckos were not able to find their footing or their handle on the ball—and were reduced to just 7 more points in the game.

The Gecko’s Yunwoo Nam had 7 markers, Omari Joab had 5, while Dwight Crisostomo added a free throw.

Sanchez finished the game with 16 points, followed by Khristian David’s 13, Aiden Norita’s 8, and Airson Atan’s 6.

In the junior varsity games prior, KHS JV beat MCS JV, 38-31 and MHS JV won against MHS JV-2, 35-12.

In the varsity standings, MHS is now tied in the lead with KHS at 4 wins and no losses each; SSHS bumped up to 3-2; MCS is at 2-2; Agape Christian School is 1-3; SIS is 0-3; and Grace Christian Academy is still 0-4.

In the junior varsity standings, MHS JV is still undefeated at 5-0; KHS is at 3-2; MHS JV-2 is at 2-3; and MCS JV have yet to win with six losses.

SSHS 59 – Garcia 23, Raquepo 10, Asuo 10, Lucero 8, Navarro 4, Konman and Addy 2.

MCS 46 – Lerio 28, Pineda 6, Sasamoto 5, San Nicolas 4, Regalado 2, Mercado Jr. 1.

Scoring by halves: 28-27, 59-46

MHS 52 – Sanchez 16, David 13, Norita 8, Atan 6, Lukas 3, Ong, Takawo, Pelisamen Jr. 2.

SIS 13 – Nam 7, Joab 5, Crisostomo 1.

Scoring by halves: 30-6, 52-13.

TANIA

From Page 24

ternational School, however said he’s confident that with her training she’ll do well in Australia.

“What is good preparation for Australia is all of the training that she has been doing to get to the place where she continually breaks NMI records. This dedication and sheer volume of training will stand her well as she moves outside in the Australian heat to compete against the world’s best cross country runners. She is ready to make us proud.”

U17

From Page 24

However, Shirley’s Addalee Taflinger got a hold on the ball after 20 quiet minutes on their end, followed by Stacy Arriola’s goal in the 27th for a tie 2-2 game.

MP United were stopped in their tracks as the lead and W was taken from them by Alyssa Borlongan’s goals in the 38th and 42nd minute.

Tan Holdings FC 2, MP United FC 1

Tan Holdings Football Club slipped past MP United Football Club, 2-1.

Isiah Hossain of Tan Holdings found the net early in the 2nd minute, but Ian Song tied up the game in the 15th minute and the rest of the first half came and went with crickets chirping in the background.

Then in the 34th minute, Anthony Bergancia kicked the tie-breaker which eventually held for the final score.

7TH

From Page 23

tchon at (670) 483-0094 or email swimbikerun.saipan@gmail.com for questions.

The event is sponsored by the Tan Siu Lin Foundation, Tan Holdings, and IT&E.

In the 6th edition of the Saipan Duathlon last year, Michiteru Mita and Kate Wilson topped the solo divisions.

Mita completed the 5-kilometer run, 20-km bike, and 2.5-km run in a time of 1:10:05 to win the men’s solo category.

In the women’s division, Kate Wilson took the No. 1 spot with a time of 1:14:36 and finished second overall.

Blue Haus, Chang Ming arrange finals tiff

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

The Top 2 seeds in the open division will duke it out in the winner-take-all finals of the Legends Sports Association Invitational Basketball League.

This, after No. 1 Blue Haus and No. 2 Chang Ming Market disposed of separate opponents last Sunday at the Koblerville Basketball Court.

Blue Haus toyed with their food before outplaying NAPA Auto Parts in the endgame, 84-73, in the first game.

After opening with a 20-15 lead in the first quarter, Blue Haus let complacency set in and allowed NAPA Auto Parts to run loose on offense.

With 3-point specialists James Abuy and Preston Basa doing their thing, NAPA Auto Parts turned the tables against the elimination round top-notchers and took a surprising 44-37 advantage at the half.

Forward Douglas "Spider" Schmidt and center Marlon De Dios came alive in the third to bring order back to Blue Haus' offense while the rest of their teammates clamped down on Basa and Abuy. As a result Blue Haus was able to take back the lead, 57- 56, heading into the fourth and final quarter.

The game remained a tight one with NAPA Auto Parts managing to grab a 66-65 lead thanks to back-to-back hits from rainbow territory by Basa.

MARK RABAGO

Blue Haus' Marlon De Dios goes for a layup against NAPA Auto Parts in the open division semifinals of the Legends Sports Association Invitational Basketball League last Sunday at the Koblerville Basketball Court.

But Blue Haus wouldn't be denied as two straight fastbreak layups and a short stab by center Kelvin Fitial gave them a 71-66 lead with 4:32 left in the ballgame.

Elmer Esdrelon and Schmidt then made back-to-back triples of their own as Blue Haus' lead swelled to 77-66 at the 3:23 mark before Basa stopped the bleeding with a 3 of his own time down to 2:12.

Alkem Ege would cut down their deficit to 79-74 on a triple at the 1:33 mark, but Ivan De Vero and Dedios would finish the game with a 6-0 windup to preserve the victory.

MARK RABAGO

Chang Ming Market's Don Brennan drives to the basket against JTM Saipan in the open division semifinals of the Legends Sports Association Invitational Basketball League last Sunday at the Koblerville Basketball Court.

Schmidt paced Blue Haus with 23 points, while De Dios had a big game with 19 points. De Vero also added 12 markers for good measure.

Basa and Abuy were the 1-2 scorers for NAPA Auto Parts with 26 and 25 points, respectively.

In the second game, Chang Ming Market was also in a dogfight against JTM Saipan before pulling away at crunch-time, 88-70.

Chang Ming Market had mirror all game long, but had to work overtime in the payoff period as the latter gave them the business.

Mark Ferrer led Chang Ming Market with 23 points, while Don Brennan had 17 points.

Joseph Torres fired 23 points in the loss for JTM Saipan, which also got 13 from Ryan Bayna.

The open division finals pitting Blue Haus against Chang Ming Market will be played this Sunday starting 2pm. It will be followed by the masters division championship between JSN Construction and Blue Haus at 3:30pm.

First Game

Blue Haus 83 – Schmidt 23, De Dios 19, De Vero 12, Esdrelon 7, Talania 6, Lauron The 6, Fitial 5, N. Mateo 2, Barrios 2.

NAPA Auto Parts 74 – Basa 26, Abuy 25, Ege 9, Escano 6, De Guzman 4, Diaz 4, Fundador 2.

Scoring by quarters: 20-15, 37-44, 57-56, 83-74.

Second Game

Chang Ming Market 88 – Ferrer 23, Brennan 17, Almario 14, Palacios 12, Jandoc 6, Quan 6, Directo 3, Camacho 3, Gontar 2, Standish 2.

JTM Saipan 70 – Torres 23, Bayna 13, Jone. Broncano 10, Romo 9, Rodriguez 7, Garcia 3, Demonteverde 2, Ruiz 2, Jona. Broncano 2.

Scoring by quarters: 23-16, 41-35, 56-53, 88-70.

Niramai wins first ever CWGA tourney

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Participants of the CNMI Women's Golf Association February Ace of the Month Tournament pose for a group photo at the Laolao Bay Golf & Resort east course.

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Niramai Koebel won her very first monthly tournament of the CNMI Women's Golf Association after winning the February plum last Saturday, Feb. 11, at the east course of the Laolao Bay Golf & Resort.

The 48-year-old Thailand native finished with a net score of 74 after shooting a 38 in the front nine and a 46 in the back nine for a gross score of 84, which after her 10 handicap, gave her the score to beat last weekend.

Koebel, who picked up the sport 15 years ago, said everything was working splendidly for her last Saturday as both her long game and putting were clicking. She also said Mother Nature cooperated well as the "weather was not so windy and not so hot."

Niramai

As for who she's dedicating the monthly championship to, she said, "I'm dedicating it to myself because I've been practicing golf very hard for a month."

Sherlyn Jones came in second, one shot off Koebel's total at net 75. The 12-handicapper came away with a gross of 87 after going 40-47 in the first nine and last nine holes.

Completing the Top 3 for February was Yuko Togawa after she carded a 76. The 5-handicapper fired a 39 in the front nine and a 42 in the back nine for a gross of 81.

A total of 11 CWGA members took part in the February tournament. The rest of the players, with their net scores in parenthesis, were as follows: Chang "Clara" Eunae (77); Rose Rohringer (78); Son "Sunny" Hyun (80); Lorraine Babauta (84); Na Liu (85); Jang "Sophia" Eunae (88); Emily Qui (89); and Dol Yamagishi (90).

The club continues to look for new members as the new season continues. For those interested in becoming a member of CWGA or for more information, contact CWGA president Yuko Togawa at 287-9856, vice president Lorraine Babauta at 287-0621, or treasurer Lou Kim at 783-7317.

7th Saipan Duathlon on Sunday

MARK RABAGO

Michiteru Mita topped the men's division of the 6th edition of the Saipan Duathlon last year. He is seen here posing with Triathlon Association of the CNMI officials after receiving his medal and prizes.

MARK RABAGO

Kate Wilson topped the women's division of the 6th edition of the Saipan Duathlon last year. She is seen here posing with Triathlon Association of the CNMI officials after receiving her medal and prizes.

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

The Triathlon Association of the CNMI's 7th Saipan Duathlon will get participants running and biking in the early hours of Sunday, Feb. 19.

The 5-kilometer run, 20-km bike, and 2.5-km run will start at Banzai Cliff in Marpi with a 5:30am opening of the transition site and a 6:15am gun start (depending on the sunrise).

The course distance will be uniform for the men's, women's, and mixed relay division of the 7th Saipan Duathlon and road bikes, mountain bikes, and fixies are all allowed.

The age categories are under 30 to 60 years old and above.

Medals will be awarded to the Top 3 male and female individual winners.

Registration is still open at https://www.webscorer.com/register?raceid=303516

There are currently 30 registered participants.

Proceeds from TRAC's 7th Saipan Duathlon will go to the sport federation's preparations for the triathlon event of this year's Honoria Pacific Games 2023 in November.

For more information, call TRAC president Manny Si-

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Mikal Bridges has career-high 45 points, Nets beat Heat

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Blue Haus, Chang Ming arrange finals tiff

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NICOLETA PAPAVASILAKIS
Tania Tan runs the 3,000m last weekend at the BU David Hemery Valentine Invitational.

Tania tunes up for Australia by breaking own record

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Tania Tan reset her CNMI national record in the 3,000m after running the event in 10:18:81 last weekend at the BU David Hemery Valentine Invitational.

The 21-year-old Fordham University senior obliterated her old mark of 10:57.58 set last year in the Ramapo Season Opener indoor track meet in New York City.

"My race started at 9:30pm because there were over 300 people in the 3K race. We raced at Boston University and it's known to be a 'fast' track. The track was super bouncy and there were so many people in the race so it pushed me to run fast. It's funny because my average mile pace for the 3k was the same as my mile PR time last weekend," she told *Saipan Tribune* in a social media message.

Tan dedicated her nth CNMI national record to the usual suspects.

"I want to dedicate this to my friends and family back home for always supporting me, but also to my Fordham coaches and teammates for pushing me to get better each day."

Tan said the Boston race was a nice tuneup for her next competition. She is currently in Bathurst, Australia to compete in the Athletics Cross Country Championships 2023.

"I think this race was a good tuneup for Australia. It's good to get some speed in before the long 10K I will have to race in Australia."

CNMI national athletics coach Dr. Ron Snyder said Tan will be tackling a longer course than the 3,000m in the Land Down Under.

"The race really isn't a good warmup for Australia. The Cross Country Championships in Bathurst will be three times as far, on uneven surfaces with mud and sand and in a 20-degree warmer climate."

Tan's high school track and field coach and headmaster of her alma mater, Saipan In-

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Mantas, Dolphins drown opponents in HS hoops

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

Saipan Southern High School and Marianas High School boys basketball varsity teams ripped through their opponents in the 2022-2023 IT&E Interscholastic Boys High School Basketball League last Wednesday at the MHS Gymnasium.

The Mantas regained their composure in the second half to win against the Mount Carmel School Knights, 59-46, while the Dolphins enjoyed a lopsided victory over the Saipan International School Geckos, 52-13.

SSHS' Christian Lucero and MCS' Derek Sasamoto both opened the game strong from 3-point range, but a foul against Rasg Asuo shook up the Knights' defenses a bit.

Then, when the Manta's Elijah Garcia got into a shooting rhythm, there was no looking back for him as he traversed Knights' territory with ease, downing 16 consecutive points.

However, Lance Lerio was a Knight in shining armor as he gave the Mantas a run for their money—surpassing Garcia's point total for 19 of his own for a close 29-28 first half.

It was anybody's game heading into the second half, with nerves showing on both

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LEIGH GASES
Marianas High School's Khristian David gets some air time as he attempts a layup against a Saipan International School defender in their varsity game of the 2022-2023 IT&E Interscholastic Boys High School Basketball League last Wednesday at the MHS Gymnasium.

U17 Kanoa teams bust through spring opener

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

Kanoa Football Club in the boys and girls U17 division busted through the starting gates in the season opener of the TakeCare NMIFA Youth Spring League 2023 as they defeated their respective foes last Saturday at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville.

Kanoa boys defeated Matansa FC, 7-1, while Kanoa girls ran the game against Southern United FC, 5-2.

Tyler Omelau found the back of the net two minutes in and doubled it four minutes later for an early 2-0 game against Matansa. Sean Gil then attempted a goal which stuck for a productive first half for Kanoa.

The only goal for Matansa was made by Wataru Kadokura in the 30th minute mark, then Kanoa's Leland Deleon Guerrero, Paul Lizama, and Markus Toves blitzed the goal for the 7-1 win.

The girls, on the other hand, were led by Andrei Kaithlyn Chavez, who bum-rushed her way through the pitch for four back-to-back goals. Teammate Aubrey Castro scored the fifth goal before SUFC's Pia Newakl and Summer Manahane scored their team's only two goals.

Shirley's FC 4, MP United FC 2

Shirley's Football Club won against MP United Football Club, 4-2.

MP United's Serin Chung drew first blood in the 10th minute and scored another in the 18th minute for an early 2-0 lead.

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NMIFA
Tan Holdings' Anthony Austria, left goes up against MP United's Cody Shimizu in the season opener of the TakeCare Youth Spring League 2023 last Saturday at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville.